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From score to song — The rise of the 'star composer' and the role of music in contemporary anime

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**From score to song — The rise of the ‘star
composer’ and the role of music in
contemporary anime**

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Abstract

From the late 1980s onward, Japanese animation (anime) has increasingly been consumed as a 'global' product, with iconic films such as *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* achieving cult-like status on both the art-cinema circuit as well as via home-video releases. The 2010s have seen anime consumption move primarily to digital streaming platforms, while in cinemas, anime releases have become some of Japan's highest grossing films of all time. Existing English-language research on anime to date has, however, mostly ignored music's role within the artistic medium — which encompasses both classically trained composers and pop musicians creating catchy, vocal led 'opening' and 'ending' themes for televised anime series.

By examining the work of a number of composers and how their representative material dovetails both artistic and financial interests, I believe my study will form part of a developing narrative in analysis of anime which is moving away from monolithic studies of individual auteur-directors and their key cinematic output, and toward a more fully-developed discussion of anime as a product of many individual, diversely skilled creators working together in synthesis as part of defined system. I will look to locate music as a core ingredient within the wider package of 'cultural product' engaging increasingly global audiences with a distinctly Japanese kind of 'media mix'. In doing so, contemporary Japanese music, its creators, audiences and their consumption habits can then be better represented alongside the existing wider coverage of the country's traditional music and cinema scenes as a whole.

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Naming Conventions

All Japanese names are given in the Western order, ie. given name followed by family name. Japanese, when transcribed, is given using the modified Hepburn system of romanisation.

Further note:

An earlier version of Chapter 2 appeared in substantially shortened form as Green, L. (2020) “Soundtracking a New ‘Japaneseness’—Musical Aesthetic and Aspiration in Japan’s Economic Bubble” in Centeno, M., & Morita, N (eds.) *Japan beyond Its Borders: Transnational Approaches to Film and Media*, pp. 159-174. Seinbunsha. The full chapter presented here develops the ideas presented there in significantly further detail.

Introduction

'It is now a question as to which has absorbed which. Is the motion picture industry a subsidiary of the music publishing business — or have film producers gone into the business of making songs?' (*Photoplay* 1929, as cited in Karlin 1994)

'Look here, everyone! What you will see is as grand, as radiant, as colourful as I am! Be grateful, clap your hands and buy.' (Adorno 1988, 46)

The term 'anime' is used to refer to animation originating from Japan (traditionally hand-drawn, although increasingly incorporating computer generated elements), and can be understood as a specific artistic 'style', encompassing any genre to be found within cinema as a whole. Although the earliest examples of Japanese animation date back to 1917, as well as a number of propaganda films made during World War 2, the beginnings of what is typically seen as 'anime' are generally linked to the work of animator Osamu Tezuka in the 1960s, where — influenced by the Western animation of Walt Disney — he refined many of the stylistic tropes now associated with anime (Clements & McCarthy 2015). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, anime boomed in Japan, with many of the most popular series originating in the form of *manga* (comic books), setting a precedent that continues to this day, whereby the most popular comic series will be animated for television, increasing exposure and sales of the original comic book product.

From the late 1980s onward, anime has increasingly been consumed as a 'global' product, with iconic films such as *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* achieving cult-like status on both the art-cinema circuit as well as via VHS releases that quickly developed a reputation for favouring highly violent, sexual content. Western companies such as Manga Entertainment in the UK and ADV Films in the US would offer both subtitled and English-dubbed versions of anime, in essence 're-mixing' the original Japanese content for Anglophone audiences. The adoption of DVD in the early 2000s meant both subtitled and dubbed versions could be contained on the same disc, while the 2010s have seen anime consumption move primarily to digital streaming platforms where the newest episodes of popular, currently airing anime

TV series such as *My Hero Academia* and *Attack on Titan* can be watched legally via online 'simulcasts' within hours of their original Japanese broadcast.

Anime now dominates the domestic Japanese cinema box-office, in 2014, 2015 and 2016, six of the top ten film releases for the year were anime (MPPAJ 2016). This effect has been felt internationally too, with 2020's *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba the Movie: Mugen Train* becoming the highest-grossing Japanese film of all time, with earnings of over \$408.3 million worldwide. It is in this light that we can understand anime not only as a specifically Japanese cultural product, but as part of a globalised media network of translation and consumption whereby international audiences are arguably as important, if not more so, than domestic ones.

Research Project Overview

My thesis will look to present and explore a theoretical framework through which we might examine the significance of music in relation to the medium of anime, seeking to outline and categorise the application of a system of 'value' or significance to music's use as both a creative and commercial tool. This will take the form of a two-fold approach which will examine both the traditional 'film score' background music composed for anime, as well as the rise of the lyric-driven Opening and Ending 'pop song' themes (also known as 'anisong') which bookend TV anime. My study will look to present the historical basis for how both of these formats rose to become an inseparable part of the anime industry's contemporary 'media mix', and illustrate this using four core composer 'case studies': Tetsuya Komuro, Yōko Kanno, Yuki Kajiura and Sawano Hiroyuki. These individuals are notable in their field not only because they compose in both of the two aforementioned formats, but because they are four of the most internationally well-known composers working in the anime industry, allowing for important discussions of anime's increasing prominence as a transnational medium, consumed by global audiences.

As such, my thesis will not only incorporate textual analysis of the composers' music and the shows it accompanies, but also present their career biographies from a historical standpoint to illustrate how the changing creative and commercial climate each was working in at the time inevitably informed both the style of their work, and the manner in which it was consumed by audiences — something that is increasingly happening not only in Japan, but globally. In presenting the 'historical' framework of these key career outlines, I seek to ground the thesis in a solid factual basis of key dates demarcated by the creative output of

these composers, and then combine this historical detail with a semiotic-driven analytical explanation of their music 'as text', attributing clear meaning to the audio component in an inherently audio-visual medium in which a soundtrack or tie-in theme song can be 'read' in much the same manner as the accompanying imagery itself. Likewise, by examining music's demarcated economic 'role' in the perpetuation of a wider system designed to generate income, we can begin to visualise a clear structure of how the Japanese anime and music industries work together. As such, my thesis will aim to not only draw together, outline and act as a comprehensive guide to the existing literature and data available on this topic, but will use this as a foundation to essentially describe and systemise a new 'state of play' of how the juncture between these two industries (and the public that consume them) has evolved up until its present state.

Literature Review

The last twenty years have seen an impressive proliferation of academic works tackling the medium of Japanese animation (anime) — with studies such as Susan Napier's *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Japanese Animation* (2005) and Rayna Denison's *Anime: A Critical Introduction* (2015) laying down a comprehensive framework of theoretical thinking that allows us to better extract meaning from this form of Japanese pop-cultural output. Some, such as Antonia Levi (1996), Sharalyn Orbaugh (2002) and Ian Condry (2013) have applied the lens of genre-theory and transnationalism to focus in on particular thematic sub-genres or trends in the globalisation of anime. Others, like Hiroki Azuma's *Otaku: Japan's database animals* (2009) and Sandra Annett's *Anime Fan Communities: Transcultural Flows and Frictions* (2014), have turned the lens on the viewers of anime — utilising the language of fan studies to argue that it is not only the medium itself that is worth studying, but those that consume it.

Taken together, this body of work presents an excellent foundation to further explore new avenues of analysis in relation to anime, as its manner of creation and consumption continue to evolve in an ever-increasingly globalised, digitalised world. So far, however, the role of music within anime has largely been neglected — a fact that is somewhat surprising considering that anime is fundamentally an *audio*-visual medium. The Japanese music market is the second largest in the world (RIAJ) and yet while anime's global popularity is — as detailed above, widely acknowledged and critiqued — serious discussion on contemporary Japanese music remains minimal. Whereas anime, in many ways, stands as Japan's foremost 'soft power' cultural export, its music industry has largely failed to extend itself beyond the country's borders, with the resultant academic discourse reflective of this.

In the literature review below, I will look to outline three core areas of reading with an aim toward conceptualising both dominant areas of discourse, as well as the methodological format of the literature. This will begin with a survey of existing studies of film music in general, of which there is a significant bulk of discourse (typically focusing on the Hollywood system), not only enabling us to draw conclusions on both its similarities and differences with the Japanese system, but also providing us with a theoretical framework for *how* we talk about music's use as part of film. Secondly, I will turn to work covering the evolution of (primarily Western-influenced) music across Japanese society in the 20th century, before lastly turning to a survey of existing academic work focusing on music's role within anime — in both cases seeking to lay the foundations for a subsequent historical narrative charting the course of anime music's evolution across the period.

Looking West — Wider case studies in film music

Originally published in 1947, Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler's classic text *Composing for the Films* remains a fundamentally useful tool in approaching the medium of music in relation to its creation for, and use in, films. While many of its more specific references now feel rather dated, the foundation of theoretical thinking it lays out is striking in its precision — ultimately revolving around an understanding of capitalism and the division of labour as the core driver behind the systematic trends of what Adorno terms 'the culture industry'. The book's introduction opens with a simple distillation: 'The motion picture cannot be understood in isolation, as a specific form of art, it is understandable only as the most characteristic medium of contemporary cultural industry' (Adorno & Eisler 1994, li).

In discourse that is highly prescient in its anticipation of later discussions of the 'media mix' and the 'system of interconnected media and commodity forms' it represents (Steinberg 2012, viii), Adorno and Eisler acknowledge the accompanying whirl of promotional activity and magazine articles surrounding the marketing of a new film as an 'appendage of the movie machinery', with music comprising another component of this 'advertising' (Adorno & Eisler 1994, 59-61). But if movie music is utterly subordinate to the movie it accompanies, to what extent can it be seen as generating musical meaning or value in and of itself? Is it merely music as 'utility', without any autonomy of its own? What can music add in contrast to the 'hyperexplicit' nature of picture and dialogue (Adorno & Eisler 1994, 14)? Deeper analysis is given to the question of value — music, as envisioned by Adorno and Eisler as the 'abstract art *par excellence*' is seen as reduced to purely functionalist aspects. It is employed as part of 'industrially controlled cultural consumption' to serve the simple purpose

of eliciting a 'spontaneous, essentially human element in its listeners' — namely, emotion. To this extent, music is seen as a commodity — with all the associated complexities present in being something available only to 'those who can pay'. With this in mind, one must question the nature and motivations of the market if it is in the interest of the creators to continually amplify a vacuum of demand among consumers (Adorno & Eisler 1994, 20).

Many of the ideas around the 'added value' music brings to cinema are well expressed in the work of Michel Chion, building further on the idea that the viewing of film is in essence, always an act of *both* seeing and hearing. This dynamic hinges upon the way 'a sound enriches a given image so as to create the definite impression, in the immediate or remembered experience one has of it, that this information or expression 'naturally' comes from what is seen, and is already contained in the image itself' (Chion 1994, 5). In this manner, Chion goes beyond Adorno and Eisler's utility-like, add-on conception of film music to suggest that the emotional elicitation it provides in relation to the visual content is very much a symbiotic, inseparable experience. Fundamentally though, it is telling that in both cases, the equation of value with emotion remains front and centre.

Another core text for contextualising the study of music in relation to movies is John Mundy's *Popular Music on Screen* (1999) which builds on Adorno's model of 'active consumption' and seeks to update it to bring it in line with the 'pleasures' of popular music and its audiences across the latter half of the 20th century. Mundy's focus on audiences (in particular, young people) serves to outline a key dichotomy between, on one hand, the 'institutional production of popular culture' and a deeply personal 'investment' and sense of ownership over what he calls 'their' music (Mundy 1999, 99). Charting the evolution of this 'media economy' through various technological and ideological changes (for example, the shift from vinyl to CD and the introduction of MTV pop videos as a kind of ultra-condensed form of film music), Mundy keeps this inherent friction front-and-centre throughout. Like Adorno, he is keenly aware of the idea of a 'market' for commodified music, following it through to its logical conclusion in films such as *Top Gun*, soundtracked by a suite of specifically composed songs from Giorgio Moroder and Tom Whitlock, many of which went on to become major chart hits. Mundy sees a film like this as a prime example of a 'cinema of attractions' that thrives on 'both visual and audio seductions'. Adorno's influence is also felt in the work of Lawrence Kramer (2009) who is effusive in his singling out of Adorno and his efforts to attribute value to music, going on to state that it is precisely music's lack of the power inherent in imagery that has seen it largely overlooked as a 'value-making force'.

Reading more broadly, the past two decades have seen a dramatic proliferation in the number of book-length studies of film music. While, understandably, these typically focus on the Western (and more specifically, American) framework of film production, the analytical toolkit they develop represents a useful means with which to picture a similar study of the Japanese system. In looking to define film music, Paul Tonks (2001) categorises it as a form of 'applied' music, a notion inherent in its supportive role to the film itself and the idea of establishing a linkage between the audio and visual components. Here, Tonks — like Adorno and Eisler before him — draws on the idea of the 'leitmotif', usually referenced in relation to the classical German composer Wagner, and its capacity to link 'the appearances of a person, place or thing together with a recurring musical phrase' (2001, 10). In identifying a kind of recurrence and resultant familiarity, we begin to draw closer to a kind of systemised understanding of how film music 'works' — in which the audience's emotional responses can be carefully crafted and elicited based on an understanding that a certain recognisable musical cue (eg. Wagner's *Bridal Chorus* from the opera *Lohengrin*) will accompany a certain kind of scene.

Tonks charts the evolution of these kinds of tropes across various chronological 'eras' of film music (touching on the historical complexities of retroactively applying the term 'golden age' to a particular era), affording particular focus to the increasing 'commercial viability' of film music. In discussing how a radio play of a song attached to a movie in the run-up to the film's release could provide a relatively cheap boost of additional publicity, we begin to see flavours of the comprehensive 'media mix' approach to marketing that I will look to analyse in relation to anime music. It is also interesting to note that Tonks sees the release of *Star Wars* in 1977 as a watershed moment, citing the phenomenal success of both the film and its soundtrack as the 'Second Coming of film music'. The fact that this event is seen as significant not only in studies of Hollywood film music (but also, as explored below, in relation to Patten's study on anime music) shows that even in the 1970s, we can discern shades of the kinds of transnationalism and cross-cultural movements that would come to influence the creation, style and consumption of anime music in subsequent years.

The question of format and scope in relation to the study of a field as broad as film music is an important one. Within the wider oeuvre of academic studies of film music, many take the format of a single composer-centric study (Sciannameo 2010, Hickman 2011, Caps 2012, Audissino 2014), covering composers as diverse as Nino Rota and his work on the classic *Godfather* trilogy, right through to an in-depth analysis of John Williams and his landmark scores for blockbuster hits such as *Jaws*, *Stars Wars* and the *Indiana Jones* series.

Others, such as Daniel Goldmark's *Tunes for 'toons music and the Hollywood cartoon* (2005) and Wegele's *Max Steiner: composing, Casablanca, and the golden age of film music* (2014) take a particular genre or era of film music as their focus, looking to identify trends or tropes (and their evolution) across a number of composers. Goldmark's work in particular is highly relevant to me — comprising as it does a distinct analysis of music composed specifically for animation in America — laying down a template for how I might conduct a similar study in Japan. It is worth noting that even here, Goldmark shapes his historical narrative around several key composer case-studies, highlighting that this biographical methodology remains a dominant style in the study of film music. This could be seen as attempting to emulate the framework of the director-centric study — attributing agency to a singular individual (or interactions between individuals).

Goldmark also discusses a number of key concepts similar to my own ideas in approaching music's role within animation — namely, the identification of recognisable 'signature' styles of composition and the development of brand names such as Disney as a 'hallmark' for quality musical scores. He also notes the importance of the CD release as a key tool in increasing the visibility of composers to the public and developing a fanbase for them beyond the use of their music in films themselves. Another crucial text in relation to this line of thinking is Virgil Moorefield's *The Producer As Composer* (2005) which, although having a wider remit than simply film music, is eloquent in its summation of many of the themes I am looking to explore — seeking to chart the evolution of the music producer 'from that of organizer to auteur' (2005, publisher's blurb). Much of the work focuses on the idea of 'star' or 'name-brand' producers like Phil Spector, famed for his trademark 'wall of sound' production style. These all-in-one figures became apt at developing strikingly original sounds that the public could readily associate with them. Moorefield outlines in detail the working methods of a number of prominent individuals, engendering an important reconfiguring of the role of the producer/composer from a 'backroom' capacity to one where their individual imprint is core to the identity of the music itself.

Returning to Goldmark, it is worth noting that there are a number of noticeable disadvantages to his approach — a significant portion of the book is devoted to minute-by-minute descriptive analysis of his chosen films and the accompanying musical cues. This kind of textualisation of the music may have value in small doses, and certainly tells us what the music 'does', but I would argue that it takes away from a deeper theoretical reading of the music as a commodity in its own right, as opposed to something continually chained to a scene-by-scene recounting of the parent film itself. In this respect, Moorefield's work feels in

many ways stronger, as it is fully engaged with — as noted above — the idea of the producer/composer as a ‘star’ factor with auteur-value all of their own.

Elsewhere, there are further concerted efforts to attribute specific value to the role music plays within film, with Rothbart (2012) outlining as many as eight different functions ranging from establishment of tone and mood and the amplification of psychological states to — of particular relevance to my work — supplying intro and outro music. Rothbart’s work is particularly useful as it goes into further detail regarding what he calls the ‘composite score’ (2012, xviii), looking beyond traditional symphonic compositions to the use of pre-existing or specially created pop songs within films, citing famous examples such as *The Graduate* or the works of Quentin Tarantino. In his eyes, the ‘pop-ness’ of the musical selections themselves become a core component of their value, working in a similar manner to the idea of the ‘leitmotif’ mentioned earlier, contributing greatly to the overall tone of the film (2012, xviii). These views are echoed by Barry Grant (2012) who ponders the increasingly symbiotic relationship between the film and pop music industries, and — in the light of vast conglomerates such as Warner, Sony and Universal all containing both film and music subsidiaries — which is the driving force behind the other. Grant is explicit in his view of the equation as a question of supply and demand, identifying many of the issues around circular perpetuations of creation/consumption systems I will look to outline in my own work — something that is of particular note when we look to observe these kinds of system at work within the scope of the emergence of particular musical trends in Japan over a defined historical period.

Composing a societal backdrop — music in Japan across the 20th century

As noted in the introduction, there is a notable paucity in specifically anime music-related academic studies. Because of this, it is worth expanding the survey to also include the wider spread of material covering the evolution of Western-influenced musical forms within Japan that emerged in the country during its period of rapid modernisation. In this manner, we might better understand the socio-cultural conditions associated with a specifically ‘Japanese’ music market, how those conditions coalesced across the course of the 20th century, and how anime music may have germinated within this context.

Two of the best books on contemporary Japanese music — Ian F. Martin’s *Quit Your Band! Musical Notes from the Japanese Underground* (2016) and David Novak’s *Japanoise: Music at the Edge of Circulation* (2013) — excel in pairing highly-readable journalistic narrative with the virtues of a tight core focus, taking a singular genre and affording it the depth necessary

to conjure up a sufficient sense of atmosphere. Their works succeed in treating songs not simply as texts, but as musical experiences rooted in the scene (located both temporally and spatially) in which they were created. Their genre-centric scope also raises a prominent theme across writing focusing on Japanese music — that of classification, an issue that also causes complexities in Hiromu Nagahara's *Tokyo boogie-woogie* (2017) in which the Japanese popular song era is seen as distinct from the notion of pop songs that emerged post 1960s. This kind of taxonomy-like approach is epitomised in Steve McClure's *Nippon Pop* (1998) — which presents itself as a kind of glossy catalogue of the Japanese music scene of the late 1990s, and again raises the question of what we can envision as pop and what we can see as art.

These kinds of formatting and typological issues are important to keep in mind, as a core component of my study will look to build a series of key composer 'profiles', utilising these to identify ongoing, evolving trends across the genre of anime music over the past 30 years. As such, it is useful to note that the existing literature on Japanese classical composers is dominated by work on one figure: Toru Takemitsu. For many, Takemitsu stands as a kind of be-all-and-end-all within the field of Japanese classical music (for instance, in popular compendiums such as *The Rough Guide to Classical Music* [2010] he is the only Japanese composer featured) — to the extent that the two become almost synonymous. On the one hand, this identifies a clear need for the field to be expanded, but on the other hand also presents an interesting opportunity: by analysing these existing works on Takemitsu, can we draw any distinct conclusions on what a biographical study of a 'Japanese composer' (as both an individual, and a concept) should represent?

James Siddons' *Bio-Bibliography* (2001) presents an interesting experiment in formatting — a mere 18 pages is devoted to the actual biography of Takemitsu, while the remainder of the book's 200 pages is comprised of incredibly detailed profiling and sorting of Takemitsu's works, performances, film scores, discography and assorted writings. In seeking to provide a wholly comprehensive capturing of the life and work of the composer, Siddons' approach suggests that privileging a quantitative element of study (eg. the sheer quantity of compositional output, catalogued in detail) is one valid way of attributing 'value' to a composer and their artistic output.

Siddons opens his account of Takemitsu's life with a number of noteworthy comments. Firstly, he cites Takemitsu as the 'leading Japanese composer' of his age and draws into question the inherently loaded nature of each of those three qualifiers. In what ways did he lead the field, and more importantly, what sense of Japanese-ness can be identified in his

compositions beyond the simple fact of his nationality. Secondly, he discusses the difficulties in 'identifying' Takemitsu, drawing a contrast between his 'concert work' and his status as a composer of film music (2001, 1). In this marked separation of the two identities lies the recurring question of typology — does Takemitsu's persona and output as an internationally renowned creator of concert pieces hold more value than when he is delineated as a 'composer of film music'?

Noriko Otake's *Creative Sources for the Music of Toru Takemitsu* (1993) alludes to these ideas further. In the book's appendix of Takemitsu's works, it lists only five of his 80-plus extant scores for film, highlighting — much like Siddons — the complexities in 'value' when categorising film music and concert music as two separate typologies. And yet, despite this noted 'partial representation' of Takemitsu's soundtracks, it also explicitly acknowledges the capacity for film music to expose itself to wider audiences than classical music. Otake even goes as far as to envision the attraction of the Western music tradition being its ensemble nature, with 'the orchestra as a collective unit... suggestive of a condition of a society in which people with different backgrounds... gather in one place' (Otake 1993, 66). This notion of collectivity — and in particular, Western music's ability to act as a systemised crucible for it — is one we will see discussed in further detail regarding its origins in early 20th century Japan.

In seeking to identify a kind of genesis or 'ground zero' for Western classical music's osmosis into wider Japanese culture, a number of works present useful insights toward answering the fundamental question: How does any given Japanese individual find themselves on the path toward becoming a composer, and why does the music they create sound the way it does? Koh-Ichi Hattori's *36,000 Days of Japanese Music* (1996) charts the course of two distinct Japanese 'pioneers' of Western musical composition, namely Rentaro Taki (1879-1903) and Kohsaku Yamada (1886-1965) — both graduates of the Tokyo National Music School. Hattori sees their lives against the backdrop of the rapidly increasing Westernisation in Meiji era Japan, and in particular looks to their creation of a canon of children's songs to suit the increasing need for material for the newly enforced education system, of which music was a required component. These children's songs would pair Western melodies with Japanese lyrics — designed to suit the simple tastes of the times, as well as the limited piano-playing abilities of the children's kindergarten teachers. Hattori sees two other factors as key in the spread of a classical music foundation across Japan. Firstly, that by the 1990s, one in three families owned a piano and that the majority of Japanese children took piano lessons at some point — with the piano itself as a core symbol of aspirational Western culture. Secondly, he cites the proliferation of music colleges and

departments in Japan — with as many as 88 across the country. It is this kind of bottom-up creation of a system, within which the potential for new composers (and as a result, new compositional output) arises, that I am interested in exploring further in terms of understanding how new musical talent is created.

Shinobu Oku's *Music Education in Japan* (1994) offers a more detailed look at how this culture of musical education manifests itself in the wider cultural mindset of Japanese children, noting in particular: 'The eagerness to acquire training in a discipline as a pastime' (Oku 1994, 5). She sees Western music as part of a culture of ownership in which Japanese children's musical sensitivity has been moved away from traditional Japanese compositions toward contemporary popular music, with the paraphernalia of modern technology — such as karaoke — being a fundamental part of this. Oku's study devotes a number of pages specifically to what she terms 'TV-songs', and includes an excerpt of the score for the theme music to the anime 'Atom Boy' (also known as *Astro Boy / Tetsuwan Atomu*) as an example. She notes the incredible popularity of these songs amongst primary school age children, and charts the evolution in their style from the 1960s through to the 1990s. As time passed, 'TV songs' became increasingly popular with adults as they incorporated more English lyrics, a wider range of backing music (e.g. American-influenced rock) and faster tempos (Oku 1994, 36-40). She closes in presenting a number of interesting observations regarding the opposition of popular and classical music within a classroom setting. Oku observes that a fall in favour of classical music in the 1960s corresponded with children citing music classes at school as their least favourite subject. With popular music becoming increasingly popular, schools now had to contend with the question of whether to incorporate it within the education system or not. Citing the work of Tomiko Kojima (1976), she looks to identify a new group, the 'musically bilingual' — those who can appreciate both popular and classical music equally, and not as mutually exclusive categories (Oku 1994, 86-91).

In closing this short overview of literature on contemporary Japanese music, it is also worth noting a number of highly engaging studies such as E. Taylor Atkins' *Blue Nippon* (2001) and Carolyn S. Stevens' *The Beatles in Japan* (2018) that take, respectively, either an entire genre of the Japanese music industry, or a particular band, as their point of focus. Both are primarily rooted in a narrative historical methodology, beginning with a delineated origin point and moving forward chronologically in time. Within this wider approach however, they also account for a range of deeper thematic discourses (e.g. questions of race and authority in Japanese jazz) and methodological approaches (such as retracing the exact geographic route the Beatles took during their trip to Japan). This diversity in methodological or thematic approaches within the broader remit of a historical narrative is echoed in the studies of the

broader field of film music analysed earlier, and is useful to keep in mind as we turn our attention to existing literature dealing with the specifics of anime music itself.

State of Play — Existing literature on anime music

The most significant existing work discussing music in relation to anime is Hideko Haguchi's *The Interaction between Music and Visuals in Animated Movies — A Case Study of Akira*, a chapter within Toru Mitsui's edited volume *Made In Japan* (2015). In this essay, Haguchi comments that 'Music has never been a primary focus in anime research', but cites 'the sophisticated interaction between [Akira's] visuals and music' as a core part of the film's lasting legacy and appeal (2015, 174), identifying both the paucity of current discourse in this distinct field, but also the centrality of its relevance to a fuller discussion of anime as an audio-visual medium. As such, this work represents an excellent framework for discussing soundtracks in relation to the medium of anime, combining both a study of the composer themselves and their production process with a textual analysis of the music in relation to the film itself. This methodology examines, in detail, the working methods of the composer, their stylistic influences and materials (e.g. instruments and production technology). With an understanding of these components, in much the same way a film director's cinematic 'style' might be observed, we can look to the composer's music as a 'text' in its own right, distinct from, yet attached to, the 'main text' of the film itself.

By looking to the musical component both on its own individual merits, but also in how it synchronises with the accompanying visuals, analysing the symbiotic artistic function of anime music in this manner will form a core part of the methodology behind my study. In practice, this would draw on the template set out in Haguchi's work, involving analytical descriptions of key scenes from selected anime films and television series, combined with an accompanying textual 'explanation' or semiotic analysis of the way music is used alongside these visuals, describing — for example — the effect certain instruments, lyrics, speed or creative influences contribute to a sense of atmosphere or feeling in the given scene. Expanding our analysis to a broader, industry-wide scale, we might also look at how the 'attachment' of a well-known composer to a specific anime becomes part of a line-up of 'named' creator talent (including the director, writers, voice actors etc.) designed to drive viewer awareness.

Fred Patten's essay collection *Watching Anime, Reading Manga* (2004) includes a piece written by Patten in the late 1980s that presents a then-current historical survey of anime soundtracks, describing their boom in the 1970s following the success of John Williams'

score for *Star Wars*, and the subsequent popularity of similar science fiction soundtracks within the medium of anime, including representative works such as *Space Battleship Yamato*. The chapter follows this up with a partial discography of the most notable soundtrack works within anime, identifying how a formal, quantitative element might be incorporated into a 'state of play'-style survey of the industry. While Patten's survey is now rather dated, it is important as it is keenly aware of these soundtracks as part of anime's merchandise-driven media mix — a calculated, commercial product that fits neatly into an interstice between Japan's music and animation industries. The idea of the media mix (which is similar in nature to franchising) centres around this strategy of dispersing a piece of content via multiple separate, but related, channels. For example, an anime TV show might be accompanied by branded character toys, music CDs, fast-food tie-ins, trading cards and so on, engendering a desire in fans of the original piece of media content to strive toward 'the complete' experience, by purchasing or interacting with all the interrelated components (Azuma 2009, 104).

Beyond these two specific works, further references to the links between music and animation can be found in edited works such as the aforementioned *Made In Japan*, as well as Carolyn Stevens' *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, Authenticity and Power* (2007). However, beyond this, specific references become more elusive, an issue further amplified by the fact that even within the wider sphere of non-anime-related contemporary Japanese pop music, there is very little extant literature, an issue identified by Jennifer Matsue in *Focus: Music in Contemporary Japan* (2016). Those volumes that do exist, such as Michael Bourdaghs' *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop* (2012), Timothy Craig's *Japan Pop: Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture* (2015) or Mark Schilling's *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture* (1997) are invariably too generalist in nature to afford deep analysis to the topic.

These ideas of globalised consumption and the mixed cultural/commercial potential present in the medium are also outlined in the works of Ian Condry, who has dealt with both music and anime in *Hip-hop Japan: Rap and the paths of cultural globalization* (2006) and *The soul of anime: Collaborative creativity and Japan's media success story* (2013). The former is particularly insightful in its engagement with the notion that increased globalisation lends itself to increased opportunities to observe transnationality in action, posing the crucial question of whether these 'cultural flows' lead to a 'more homogeneous world culture, or whether processes of localization ultimately transform borrowed styles into distinctive domestic versions' (2006, 19). Condry's analyses of globalisation form part of a wider discourse around media manifestations of 'soft power', informed by studies such as

McGray's *Japan's Gross National Cool* (2002) and Iwabuchi's *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (2002), which are important works to consider when seeking to place both music and anime as Japanese cultural products within a transnational context.

Recently, studies such as Jonathan Clements' *Anime: A History* (2013) have been emblematic of an approach whereby both scholars and fans of anime are moving increasingly from discussing not only 'anime as text' but also 'anime as product', where its value as a pop cultural product is understood as part of a multimedia industry worth over \$6.5 billion a year. This incorporates a more business orientated approach to the medium in which production decisions such as whether to distribute an anime series internationally or what kinds of associated merchandise to create are considered in the light of how that series might recoup its initial production costs. These 'product cycles' are further complicated by a current trend away from the traditional realm of 'packaged goods' such as CDs and DVDs, and toward a more digital-based economy defined by online streaming services, something which may have major implications for the future of media content if its notion of value becomes detached from the physical medium it is contained on (2013, 215). In this respect, the anime and music industries can learn from each other, but also from global markets where these particular trends of digitalisation have occurred at an increased pace.

A study of the role music plays in relation to the medium is vital to present a full picture of the anime industry and the way the Japanese music industry intersects with it. By examining the work of a number of composers and how their representative works dovetail both artistic and financial interests, we can look toward contributing to a developing narrative in anime analysis which is moving away from monolithic studies of individual auteur-directors and their key cinematic output, and toward a more fully-developed discussion of anime as a product of *many* individual, diversely skilled creators working together in synthesis as part of defined system — what Clements envisions as the 'artistic heritage' of 'sets of creatives in particular generational locations' (2013, 2).

Aesthetic and value within popular music studies

Looking to field of popular music studies, given the sheer breadth of the field, I found focusing specifically on works handling notions of musical 'value' a useful means of narrowing my lens of analysis toward those seeking similar theoretical approaches to that which I would myself employ. To this end, what proved particularly insightful was the notion that musical value could itself contain many kinds of value, a concept that relates well in the

foundation they lay for discussion of media mix theories, and the way the music attached to a piece of media might manifest (differently) many forms of value within the various interlinked nodes forming the 'mix' it exists as part of. As Roy Shuker puts it in *Understanding Popular Music*, popular music texts are 'dynamic not static, mediated by patterns of economic and social organisation and the relationship of individuals and social groups to these patterns: neither texts nor their consumers exist in isolation' (Shuker 2016, 4).

A number of important studies, chiefly those by Simon Frith et al (2004) and Anne Danielsen (2006) focus on working towards a defined notion of specifically 'aesthetic' value. This approach chimed closely with my own feelings of what was important to convey in musical analysis, and also cuts to the heart of longrunning discussions about where this value can be located in distinctions between 'serious' (ie. classical) and popular music. In posing questions such as why popular hits sound the way they do, or how we can tell whether something sounds 'good' or not (Frith et al 2004, 32-33), we seek toward quantifying or classifying this aesthetic value in some manner or other. In both works, there is a sense of the need for an identification or filtration process to begging to map out a canon or body of work within which this aesthetic value might be located in common, and that to do so necessitates also an identification of its 'cultural significance' (Danielsen 2006, 56). In tandem with a desire to approach this value from a cultural and sociological standpoint, more recent studies have also sought to tackle the aesthetic value of music from a philosophical standpoint, drawing on ideas from the post-Kantian tradition in aesthetics by Hegel, Adorno, and others.

More broadly, the last two decades have seen a burgeoning body of work that sees the internet as crucial in the changing dynamic of value creation and 'co-creation' within the music industry, with issues such as music privacy serving as both threats and drivers toward new mutually beneficial relationship structures between consumers and producers (Choi and Burns 2013). There is also clear value placed in the roles of intermediary personnel, with work by Wenceslas Lizé citing figures such as managers and agents as potential value creators in their own right (Lizé 2016). Elsewhere, studies such as Luca Coscieme's work on 'cultural ecosystem services' place value clearly on the non-material side of the dimension. For Coscieme, 'inspiration' is a key factor in the transference from the origin point of artists and creators of music to the more embodied form of social capital, and it is the ecosystem that they exist in that 'represents the source of inspiration' (Coscieme 2015, 122).

Methodology

The methodology behind my thesis will primarily be rooted in intertextual discourse analysis, utilising a descriptive, explanatory approach (Kumar 2005) to the reading and representation of social-cultural meanings. In this manner, I will look to textually outline, describe and analyse both primary sources (anime films and TV series, as well as their soundtracks and accompanying songs), existing academic writing, reliable media reports and industry data on the subject of popular music in Japan. When originally conceiving this project, I had also envisioned the use of first-hand material generated during a series of fieldwork visits to Japan, such as descriptions of relevant 'locales' where anime music is consumed (for example, live concerts and record stores). This more experiential, ethnographic approach would have also included the scope for interviews with key figures such as singers, musicians and record label personnel working in the Japanese music and animation industries. However, with the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic forcing the cancellation of my initial fieldwork trip in April 2020, and Japan's ongoing policy of preventing in principle the entry of any non-Japanese nationals to the country, the realities of the rapidly changing conditions meant that much of this activity was no longer feasible.

As such, I looked to refocus my methodological aims toward drawing together and presenting an analytical 'state of play' of the juncture between the Japanese anime and music industries — in doing so, incorporating both factual elements (e.g. historical description and data) and an accompanying analytical 'reading' of said elements. This methodology ultimately combines aspects of historiographical and narrative approaches (Shacklock & Thorp 2005) – for example, case studies of a number of key composers — with those of social semiotics and multimodal texts (Kress & Mavers 2005) — the concept that all modes of expression have specific roles to play in the creation of meaning, and that these processes can be observed in the way people create, circulate and consume 'information' as part of their daily lives.

In terms of methodology in approaching the analysis of television theme songs, my study was particularly informed by the approach outlined by Daniel Goldmark in his *Tunes for Toons*, in particular his delineation of the functions cartoon music must encompass:

In many ways the responsibilities of cartoon music resemble those taken on by traditional film scores: establishing the setting, drawing the audience into the story, providing the viewer with additional information about a scene, telling the viewer how to feel at any given moment, and vitalizing the "lifeless" pictures of the film. This last

point is particularly important for animated drawings, whose figures— unlike those in live-action films— were never alive to begin with. The medium of animation requires that music for cartoons be conceived and constructed differently than traditional feature film music. (Goldmark 2007, 7)

This, then, provides a kind of playbook of approaches by which to go about the analysis of theme music for animation – cross-referencing a textual conveyance of the music’s contents against its responsibilities as set out above. By linking together these elements, my belief is that it is possible to convey, via discourse analysis, a transference of the causal significance of the auditory content of the song into the textual medium.

In stating this however, it is important to recognise that the scope of my thesis also encompasses musical scores as well as theme music. To this end, I also found James Siddons’ *Toru Takemitsu: a bio-bibliography* particularly inspiring in that its methodological approach to music theory encompassed a drawing on a broad cross-section of interlocking elements. These would include time-period specific focuses, identification and analyses of the ‘textural’ quality of the music, and grounding of the music within cultural and theological backgrounds (Siddons 2001, 17). In essence, what Siddons’ study outlines is that it is precisely in the *combinatory* nature of methodological approach to a composer’s scores that a better, or at the very least fuller, theoretical mapping might be obtained.

A combinatory approach mixing aspects of both these methodologies allows me to build an analytical ‘toolkit’ or linguistic ‘grammar-set’ for my study in which value and meaning can be attributed to individual creators, their identifiable compositional ‘style’ and specific semiotic signifiers within their output — bringing together narratives of the personal and collective to better illustrate the formation of cultural practices. In practice, this will entail drawing from a number of sources such as trade publications and industry data, categorising and assembling these toward a supportive framework (including visual aids such as graphs) that supports a clear chronological narrative, guiding the reader through the history of anime music from its infancy to the present day. This mixing of data sources first and foremost allows for the identification and categorisation of specific ‘signs’, for example, a recognisable melodic motif in a piece of music, the way that music is packaged on a CD, or how a composer’s name is used as a marketing device. But it also allows us to examine further meaning generated in the conditions under which this ‘sign’ has been created and, through the documentary analysis of a number of case studies and historical narratives, establish whether these circumstances represent a clear norm or ‘trend’ for the anime music industry. Gerard Genette’s work on ‘paratexts’ (1991) is especially useful here given its focus on how

these associated devices all aid in the way they support the core text, 'surround it and extend it', all toward ensuring its presence in the world — indeed, to make it more *present* (Genette 1997, 1).

For example, in presenting why a composer's soundtrack for an anime series in a given year was particularly significant, my thesis will examine how that soundtrack builds on creative elements first introduced in their previous work, the influence and commercial success of other composers working at the same time and how it acts as a platform for a subsequent series of CD releases and live concerts which not only generate a specified amount of revenue, but also draw international awareness to the composer. This outline would then be linked to, contextualised and analysed in relation to established trends outlined in existing literature on the field of anime, allowing my thesis to 'join up' and triangulate established theory (e.g. that of the 'media mix') with a fresh field of discourse (anime music specifically). Following on from my example, we might use Ian Condry's theories of observable 'paths' of cultural globalisation and collaboration to analyse and explain why a soundtrack by a Japanese composer might mix English lyrics performed in a hip-hop style with classical Italian opera. In this manner, I will ultimately look to present an interconnected media 'web' of linked elements, whereby a succession of creative individuals and established industry norms can be outlined as a defined system.

Motivation and positionality

The intertextuality of my approach is crucial in that it is firmly situated in a background of media industries, both from the point of view of analysing the production and consumption of various paratexts in tandem, but also bringing into account my background working within media industries myself. Prior to the commencement of my MA degree programme and then PhD at SOAS, I worked for four years in the UK music industry. Much of this was spent at a subsidiary of the British supermarket giant Tesco as — in an effort to pre-empt a shift to digital consumption methods of music and movies, and seeing new challengers such as Spotify and Netflix encroaching on a realm they previously dominated through CD and DVD sales — they established digital media platforms offering this content to stream on-demand.

In this role, I was to occupy a position especially attuned to the nuances of interlocking media industry sectors. By working for a streaming service, I was in essence both facilitating the distribution of music to consumers, but also aiding in their choice of consumption by functioning in a 'curatorial' role. Here, by writing about and reviewing both new music releases, live concerts and covering other industry-related news, I would in essence stand

as a kind of intermediary between music fans and the artists and record labels that were ultimately the origin point of the content they consumed. It is in this manner that I came to take a particular interest in not only the music itself (as a fan and listener myself), but of the particular processes and trends that dictated its flow within this system. Indeed, a great deal of my initial motivation and interest in Japan as a field for study stemmed from my realisation that their music industry norms — ranging from popular genres and styles, to channels of musical distribution themselves — differed substantially from those found in the UK at that point in time.

My journalistic background has remained as a strong bedrock behind my analysis of media, and I have continued to contribute in a freelance capacity to a number of specialist publications, specifically focusing on Japan and the anime industry — such as *The Japan Society Review*, *NEO* magazine and the website UK Anime Network — throughout my studies. From this standpoint of positionality, I see my approach to popular product and its consumption as fundamentally driven by a desire to explore and better understand patterns of local and global interactions of production and consumption, whether in Japan or wider afield. There are, naturally, many ways to approach a study of these industries, but if there is one thing in particular my experience as both a fan and professional commentator on music has instilled in me, it is that the most interesting narratives are often found at that precise interstice where ‘media’ and ‘industry’ conjoin.

Theoretical framework

Drawing on both my positional standpoint and the methodological approaches outlined above, I will develop a theoretical framework building on the ideas of anime as a ‘media mix’ or ‘transmedia’ property put forward by scholars such as Marc Steinberg and Ian Condry. This framework — which envisions the medium of anime as the product of a number of closely integrated media systems and industries working in tandem — is essential for fully understanding the role of music in relation to anime, allowing us to examine the financial and fan-engendered drives that keep the system perpetuating in terms of output. It is this particular kind of interlinked ‘media ecology’ that Steinberg’s theory seeks to explain — examining how increasingly, audiences are moving away from simply consuming the narrative contents of a piece of media and toward a more active ‘participation’ in a world of connected imagery and merchandise (Steinberg 2012, 113-114). In its drive toward revenue creation, this media mix is shown to be particularly inclined to self-reinforcement and self-fulfilment, leading to an environment that — once established — engenders an appetite of consumption whereby audiences actively aid the continual perpetuation of successful brand

identities. In this manner, we can not only get a better sense of how these media mixes perpetuate, but in analysing the driving motives behind their creators and consumers, also understand why.

In examining the individual role of the composer as part of this system, works such as Bonnie Wade's *Composing Japanese Musical Modernity* are also useful — putting forward the concept of 'affordance theory', namely, how music is used and received by both creators and consumers, as opposed to traditionalist analysis of music structures themselves. Here, I will look to examine how music adds 'value' to anime's wider media mix in the way it is packaged and consumed, from multiple, 'collectible' CD releases sold in heavily fan-centric 'zones' of Japan such as Tokyo's Akihabara district, to live performance events dedicated purely to anime music. These activities of engagement are also explored in musicologist Christopher Small's theory of 'musicking', in which music becomes a kind of complex social activity in which both creators and consumers become nodes in an inherently relational system of interaction and participation. In essence, a network of identifiable nodes or niches — albeit, in the case of anime music, niches which are increasingly becoming more global in nature.

In identifying this concept of recognisable niches, the work of Steve Neale surrounding genre theory is also relevant, whereby a number of recognisable tropes and conventions within cinematic genre are identified and observed in order to better understand how the recognition of these tropes creates meaning for audiences. I will look to adapt this system in applying it to anime music, proposing a similar method of categorisation and analysis that will look to find syncretism between the systems of 'film genre' and 'musical genre'.

Chapter Overview

In looking to apply these theories, I have structured my thesis around five core chapters, which allow for both a simultaneous historical and theoretical approach of the field to run in tandem — thus, not only presenting a representative 'state of play' lens to be applied to the anime industry across several decades, but also approach each of these junctures armed with the theoretical discourse outlined above.

Chapter 1: Transitions in time — Toward an origin of Anisong

The 1960s and 1970s can in many ways be seen as the embryonic stage in the subsequent formation of the animation industry in Japan, with landmark television series such as Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy (Tetsuwan Atomu)* often cited as the 'ground zero' of the medium that

would come to be known as 'anime'. Studies such as Marc Steinberg's *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* have been emblematic in viewing the rise of Japan's popular media industry through the lens of the 'media mix' — a combinatory approach of interrelated media contents and merchandise (eg. toys, branded food products etc.) that serve to proliferate a single property across a variety of mediums. Steinberg's study in particular sees *Astro Boy* as central in codifying the core ingredients of this model in the early 1960s.

However, perhaps due to its status as appendage to the core media property, music has long occupied an intangible, obscured role within this media mix, despite its obvious significance within the dual audio-visual function of televised and cinematic output. Here, I would offer a revisionist history, whereby the accompaniment of music to the formative stages of the anime industry was in fact a central component in its appeal. Equally, through a close reading of the kind of music used to accompany these early animated series, we can glean an insight into a wider vision of Japan 'through' a particular sub-genre of popular song — a televised soundtrack to an entire generation of Japan's youth that would come of age at precisely the time the country's economy reached its peak.

Chapter 2: Tetsuya Komuro — Musical aesthetic and aspiration in Japan's economic bubble

This chapter takes as its focus the career of multi-million-selling pop producer Tetsuya Komuro to illustrate how anime music became increasingly transnational in nature during the years of Japan's booming economy. Spurred on by his time spent in the UK, where he was influenced by the budding rave culture he found there, Komuro quickly became known for the synthesised, Western-influenced sound of his productions, the soundtrack for a new breed (*shinjinrui*) of twenty-something consumers living in life's fast lane. Both generating and reflecting a new image of Japanese affluence and aspiration, this music was consumed at a national level, but crucially, was representative of wider global trends in pop cultural aestheticism. Incorporating a mix of Japanese and English lyrics, Komuro's music allows us to unpack the question of an 'auditory Japaneseness' and its role within the wider socio-cultural backdrop of the time.

Chapter 3: Yoko Kanno and beyond — searching for nostalgia in anime music from Japan's 'Lost Decade'

When Japan's economic bubble burst in 1991, it would mark the start of a prolonged period of financial stagnation that would see the next ten years dubbed 'The Lost Decade' (*Ushinawareta Jūnen*). In stark contrast to the opulence and aspiration of the 1980s, falling real-term wages and stagnant price levels saw ravenous consumption give way to a more cautious, hesitant mood amongst the nation's consumers. These shifts would be felt in popular media such as anime and music too, with the dreams and hopes of previous generations increasingly ringing hollow to Japanese entering the workforce in these turbulent times. Those soundtracking this era, such as iconic anime composer Yoko Kanno,¹ would explore new auditory frontiers to reflect the melancholy of these 'lost years'.

Rose Bridges' short volume *Yoko Kanno's Cowboy Bebop Soundtrack* (2017) was notable in being the first title in English devoted to a single anime soundtrack, attributing primacy to the musical component of one of the 1990s' best-loved classic series. Utilising Bridges' work as a foundation, this chapter will seek to situate a broader analysis of Kanno's compositional style, and that of a number of her contemporaries, against the backdrop of Japan in the 1990s. Despite drawing prolifically from 'imported' musical idioms such as jazz and classical music, I argue that Kanno in fact imbues her music with a distinctly Japanese sense of nostalgia, a thematic resonance which places it within a long lineage of aesthetic 'longing' for something the listener can no longer obtain. In doing so, I seek to introduce new complexities to the meaning of 'value' when questioning anime music as an artistic medium, positioning it as a core element within the kind of escapist 'world-building' that saw anime become an increasingly welcome retreat to those overwhelmed by the all-too-real pressures of Japan's faltering economy.

Chapter 4: Music for a new millennium. Form, format and formula in the music of Yuki Kajiura

¹ While the decision to include two case studies of female composers — Yoko Kanno and Yuki Kajiura — was motivated largely by the fact they stand as two of the most famous and acclaimed composers for anime both in Japan and internationally, their status as 'female composers' can be considered in the context of comprehensive studies around gender and composition in Japan, such as that by Nishikawa (2002) and subsequent work by Etheridge (2014) and Wang (2019). Here, while acknowledging the many struggles facing female composers in contrast to their male counterparts, their position as part of Japan's musical trajectory from its opening to Western music following the Meiji Restoration in 1868 is firmly established, and rooted in an understanding that music was fundamental to a development of self-expression, character building and the education of children (Nishikawa 2002, 88-90). This is born out, too, in Oku's 1994 study of musical education in Japan, in which she notes that 'More than half of the young girls in the cities begin to take piano lessons when they are four or five years old. Fewer boys learn to play the piano than girls' (Oku 1994, 5).

As the 1990s gave way to the 2000s, Japan's pop culture output was reaching its apotheosis, with manga magazine *Shonen Jump* having reached an all-time high circulation figure of 6.5 million copies sold weekly, and Studio Ghibli's acclaimed animation *Princess Mononoke* becoming the country's highest grossing film ever. As Japan greeted the dawn of a new millennium, consumers were faced with a bewildering variety of choice from an industry that had now spent decades finely honing its ability to play to specific, defined tastes. Against this ultra-saturated framework of interwoven media properties, what strategies could individual creators employ to differentiate and mark out their work amidst a mass of hyper-commercialised product that clamoured for consumer attention?

Recent discourse within the field of anime studies such as Christopher Bolton's *Interpreting Anime* asks us to consider, through critical close analysis, what it means to 'read' or interpret a visual text such as anime. By relocating the focus of this 'interpretation' to the field of anime music, we might instead ask what it means to 'hear' the music that accompanies anime, interpreting both the forms and formulas these soundtracks utilise to ask how they too can draw attention to themselves. Utilising the career of composer Yuki Kajiura as a specific case study, I will look to illustrate how the blending of diverse genres and release strategies was able to elevate her output beyond simple 'background' music, bringing it, instead, very much to the foreground in the way audiences both in Japan, and internationally, would engage with it.

Chapter 5: Strategies in global appeal — Hiroyuki Sawano and the opening of anisong to the world

While anime fans outside of Japan in the 1990s and 2000s had to content themselves with first VHS and then DVD releases of material that had often first aired in Japan months if not years previously, the rapid popularisation of digital streaming services such as Crunchyroll in the early 2010s would revolutionise international consumption of the medium. Fans around the world were now able to watch their favourite anime shows legally, often within hours of its original broadcast on Japanese television. This digital shift would see overseas revenues for the anime industry blossom from around 22% in 2010 to nearly 50% in 2017.

Japan's record labels — which, as members of the production committees,² would invariably contribute the opening and ending theme songs (anisong) to many of these shows — would

² Anime production committees would, from the 1990s onwards, become the 'mainstream' method of funding an anime production. A TV station or goods manufacturer would typically represent the largest investors, but by accompanied by financial, promotional and organisational backing from games,

be more reticent in observing this rapid shift to digital, held back by the norms of a domestic music market that to this day is still largely dependent on CD sales. For a number of artists however, anime would provide the perfect medium to illustrate the merits of a sizable international fanbase, forcing the Japanese music industry to slowly but surely sit up and take notice.

This chapter takes as its focus a case study of the composer Hiroyuki Sawano — famed for his soundtracks to popular anime series such as *Attack on Titan* — to illustrate how the 2010s would mark a kind of ‘moment of revelation’ for the Japanese music industry in terms of its relation to both animated content and the international marketplace for it. Tracing out responses to changes in both distribution and consumption of music, I would suggest that the apparent freedoms of these new, digitally enabled marketplaces have ultimately led to a doubling down in structured, systemised approaches to music-making that seek to ‘arouse’ anime fans both in Japan and internationally like never before.

Research Questions

Across these five central case studies, I will apply a number of key research questions that will act as the central structural pillar and narrative drive for this study. This will begin by looking to historical precedent and establishing what ways we can identify the rise and subsequent perpetuation of anime music as a specific sub-genre and system within the wider anime and Japanese music industries. To do so, I will also examine how, as one staff member among many other creative individuals, to what degree can we attach a level of specific agency and input to a composer working on a given anime project? This sense of the composer as ‘part’ of something larger also extends to their output — namely, in what ways does anime music exist as part of anime’s wider ‘media mix’, and does this problematise its existence as either ‘art’ or ‘product’? In addition — and this returns to my central, overarching core research question — to what degree can we establish key criteria in evaluating the critical and commercial ‘value’ of anime music?

In looking to answer these central objectives, I will utilise concepts — such as that of the ‘media mix’ — previously developed in the existing literature on anime as a whole, and relate them to the topic of anime music specifically. This will be further augmented with a quantitative approach to industry data central to the study (e.g. record sales, key composer

music or other associated companies. The larger the number of investors, the smaller the individual risk to any one of them - reducing the risk of overall losses. (Mori 2018, 90)

discographies, measurable consumer habits) — organising and consolidating this information for best use. My envisioned final outcome for the project is for it to act as a solid, formal foundation for future discussion of music in relation to anime, and ideally — develop further English-language discourse relating to both Japanese popular music in general as well as further detailing its importance — much like anime itself — as a core ingredient within the wider package of ‘cultural product’ engaging increasingly global audiences with a distinctly Japanese kind of ‘media mix’. In this manner, not only could Japanese popular music be better represented alongside the wider coverage of the country’s traditional music and cinema as a whole, but my study would also ideally allow others to better locate this artform within wider discussions of distinctly contemporary ‘global’ music and cinema scenes and the way audiences engage with them.

Chapter 1: Transitions in time — Toward an origin of ‘Anisong’

Introduction

For many of us, TV theme tunes remain some of our fondest, most nostalgia-laden memories of childhood. These indelible melodic nuggets remain like time capsules, instantly accessible to us long into our adulthood, becoming auditory snapshots of the tastes and trends of earlier eras. But beyond the simple pleasure of enjoying these tunes as particularly memorable music, theme songs serve a clear functional purpose in their accompaniment to the televised serials they bookend. They act as attention-grabbing ‘prompts’, reminding us the show is beginning, that we should be ready, be excited, for what is about to follow. In their own right, they can serve as the inspiration for viral memes, or, when released as a separate single, sell millions of copies — all with the added benefit of promoting the show to which they were originally attached.

The last twenty years have seen a proliferation in the degree of scholarship focusing on the role music plays within audio-visual media, and while the bulk of it has understandably centred on composers within the classical vein — supplying traditionally orchestrated background music for films — there has also been scope to examine more specific niches, such as music for specific genres (e.g. rom coms, musicals, war movies) or the trend for soundtracks comprised wholly of pre-existing pop songs (typified by classics such as *The Graduate* or *Pulp Fiction*). Within this field, studies such as Daniel Goldmark’s *Tunes for ‘Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon* have acted as vital bridges between this increasing awareness of the role music can play within visual media and attempts to solidify the early history of animated, cartoon content, both in the USA and Europe, and in Asia (Clements 2017, Du 2019). This fleshing out of both the musical and historical evolution of animated content matters not only because it encourages us to treat these filmic and televisual works as media contents composed of multiple individual parts, but also because in doing so, we are afforded better opportunities to observe the kinds of transnational cultural flows discussed earlier, joining together global creative trajectories both spatially and temporally.

Looking to Japan, the 1960s and 1970s can in many ways be seen as the embryonic stage in the subsequent formation of the country's animation industry, with landmark television series such as Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy (Tetsuwan Atomu)*³ often cited as the 'ground zero' of the medium that would come to be known as 'anime'. Studies such as Marc Steinberg's *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* have been emblematic in viewing the rise of Japan's popular media industry through the lens of the 'media mix' — a combinatory approach of interrelated media contents and merchandise (e.g. toys, branded food products etc.) that serve to proliferate a single property across a variety of mediums. Steinberg's study in particular sees *Astro Boy* as central in codifying the core ingredients of this model in the early sixties. Music, too, has a clear role to play here.

'Anisong' — a portmanteau of both 'anime' and 'song' — is the term used to describe the theme music that accompanies anime. These theme songs typically operate around a simple verse / chorus pattern that fills the one-and-a-half-minute long space occupied by the TV show's opening and ending title sequences. In this manner, they provide a catchy audio accompaniment to the functional purposes of the title sequence itself, which is tasked not only with announcing the name of the show and the staff involved in its creation, but also to tease via montage-style segments of visual action, a kind of 'best bits', often synchronised with the accompanying music. Due to their recurrence before every episode of the parent show, opening theme songs quickly become familiar to audiences, and this familiarity creates a captive market for consumers to purchase the song, which is typically expanded out with further verses and choruses to fill a longer run-time when released as a standalone single.⁴ Often understood as a particular sub-genre existing within the wider sphere of Japanese music, anisong is perhaps better read — much like anime itself — as an artistic style, able to incorporate a wide range of sub-genres within it, ranging from pop to rock, jazz and electronic dance music. Today, anisong stands as one of the central components in anime's wider media mix, with streaming service Spotify reporting in a press release how anime has 'helped Japanese music go global' (2018). This forms part of a Japanese music

³ Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989). Pioneering figure in Japanese comics and animation. Often seen as the Japanese equivalent of Walt Disney, Tezuka is held up to this day as a central figure in the establishment of Japan's anime industry during Japan's Post-War period. As a central focus of this chapter, a synopsis and more detailed discussion of *Astro Boy* are offered later.

⁴ Stevens (2008, 93) presents a particularly good account of the power of the links between television and music via the medium of 'tie-up' songs and attests that the degree of integration evidenced in Japan is seen 'nowhere else in the developed world'. Stevens goes on to suggest that this interdependence creates a high degree of turnover in the world of Japanese pop music, in which the constant churn of new material in turn further drives the fervour and captivity of the market. Ashbaugh's (2010, 327-333) account of the *Space Battleship Yamato* and *Mobile Suit Gundam* franchises is also useful in charting the commercial impact of merchandising released in tandem with some of Japan's biggest long-running anime franchises.

industry deeply wedded to the idea of single releases interrelated or 'tied up' with other mediums, a figure as high as 88% of all releases in the years 1990 through to 2004 (Asai 2008, 477). In understanding how the industry reached this position, it is vital to look back to its origins, identifying how, from the very beginning, 'anisong' was more than just the theme music for the shows it accompanied, but the theme music for an entire generation of Japanese youth and the kind of media 'world' they would construct around themselves.

Perhaps due to its status as an 'appendage' to the core media property (Horkheimer et al. 2002, 130), music has long occupied an intangible, obscured role within this media mix, despite its obvious significance within the dual audio-visual function of televised and cinematic output. Here, I would offer a revisionist history, asking to what extent the accompaniment of music to the formative stages of the anime industry was in fact a central component in its appeal. Likewise, how would it come to shape an aesthetic conception of familiarity amongst its audiences? Through a close reading of the kind of music used to accompany these early animated series, I will seek to question to what extent we can glean a wider vision of Japan 'through' a particular category of popular song — a televised soundtrack to an entire generation of Japan's youth that would come of age at precisely the time the country's economy reached its peak.

Across my thesis, my core research question remains to what degree we can attribute a sense of 'value' — commercial or otherwise — to the use of music within anime. In subsequent decades, such as the 1980s, the backdrop of a booming Japanese economy and aspirational consumer culture provide a more overt means to answer this question. In this chapter however, by focusing on the 1960s and 1970s, I seek to interrogate the definition of 'value' in more subtle ways, drawing on the body of anime music from this era to ask whether they can be read as more than simply pop songs, but rather, as aesthetic symbols of a formative era in the story of Japan's Post-War development. How did the social backdrop of a country 'coming of age' manifest itself within the content of the music, and did this in any way differ to what would follow in the 1980s? Likewise, in this period of gestation, can we identify early signs of a systematic approach to the creation of anime music, in an effort to understand how many of these practices would ultimately become industry norms?

By analysing both the 1960s and 1970s in tandem, my study will centre on the use of historiography as its core methodological drive, providing a close reading of prior historical studies of anime — such as the aforementioned work by Steinberg — repositioning and recontextualising them through the specific lens of their engagement (or lack of) with music's role within the medium. In their overview of historiography, Roger Spalding and Christopher

Parker describe the study of history as having ‘an apparently inexhaustible capacity for moving on and developing new areas of interest, not necessarily because of the discovery of new evidence but because historiography is a product of contemporary society, which is in constant flux’ (Spalding and Parker 2007, 4). In this context, we might read our decision to focus specifically on music in relation to existing histories of anime as a direct reflection on the increased importance music plays within the contemporary anime industry — casting our analytical gaze back through time to find evidence of something that was historically present, even if coverage of it was at that point minimal. ‘The past itself cannot demand to be heard, the choice is ours,’ concur Spalding and Parker (2007, 4). Or in other words, we begin to allow ourselves to hear the music precisely because we *choose* to hear it. What is at stake here – or to put it another way, why it is important to allow ourselves to *hear* the music – is the sense that a music-less reading of the anime industry offers only a partial portrait of its contents. Thus, by re-balancing the sense of audio-visual primacy toward the auditory, we encounter many of the same thematic and aesthetic discourses, but crucially, our *understanding* of these discourses is strengthened because we are now encountering and reading them on multiple interconnected levels of meaning.

At this point, it is prudent to offer a clear definition regarding the difference between the general category of ‘theme songs’ and the more specified term ‘anisong’. For the purposes of this thesis, I define ‘theme songs’ as any musical composition appended to a piece of visual media, and is typically played over either the opening or closing title sequences. They may either be composed specifically for that piece of media, or be a pre-existing piece that has been appended to it. My definition of ‘anisong’ confers a broad degree of overlap with that of ‘theme songs’, but holds particular significance as a subset of that category that did not immediately appear in tandem with the appearance of anime on television.

Rather, as this chapter will go on to argue, the identification of anisong as a particular category is reliant on a mode of audience identification in line with broader standards of cultural connoisseurship, in which – just as a theme song might become part of the audio-visual mental association a viewer holds for a piece of media content – ‘anisong’ does so in a manner particularly attuned to a burgeoning body of anime as a medium in and of itself. To this end, I would seek to identify the likes of *Astro Boy* not as an ‘origin’ of anisong, but as one of several nodes on a runway that – over the subsequent decade – would serve as a route toward a more specified juncture when anisong began to be recognised as an industrio-cultural category in its own right. As music releases became more and more of a key component in the broader media mix associated with an animated show in Japan, anisong would serve as a useful form of genred labelling – in the manner of delineating a

release as 'pop', 'classical', 'jazz' and so on – marking this content out as created from and for a specific element of Japan's media consumption system.

Crucially, as texts in their own right, anime theme songs from the 1960s and 1970s hold a descriptive function too. Spalding and Parker comment, 'Not all descriptions of the past have to be presented in the form of the printed word, but whatever the medium, the point is that there is a distinction between the past and a description of it' (2007, 1). Taken in relation to film theory, this approach tallies with an increasing desire to offer more diverse appreciations and valuations of the cinematic medium, beyond simply visual entertainment. As Girish Shambu puts it, succinctly describing the status quo: 'In film culture, value flows from pleasure, and since the old cinephilia privileges aesthetic pleasure, it has long been the key criterion of value for films' (Shambu 2019, 2). In an effort to move toward new criterion of value, by listening to a song from half a century ago, but within the present context and setting of today, we engage in another kind of historiography — one in which the medium of music presents us with a 'past' via a number of interrelated channels. These might be in the overt form of lyrical content, or more abstract in nature. For example, can a particular kind of 'past' be detected in the kinds of melody, instrumentation or recording techniques used? To this end, I seek to expand the notion of 'aesthetic pleasure' to resolutely include an auditory as well as visual element.

These two core strategies — descriptive close readings of the musical content itself, as well as a dissection of music history specifically as a history of the technologies and 'mediums' of music — tally with those observed by Caspar Melville (2015, 214-223) as crucial in understanding the interface by which listeners interact and obtain meaning from the music they consume. Utilising both approaches together, we can read anew histories of music's role within a wider socio-cultural backdrop, not simply as a result of interlocking cause-and-effect, but as part of a slowly evolving, consistent narrative that continually iterates on the existing status quo toward an end goal of increased proliferation. To this extent, some preliminary background discussion of Japan's position in relation to the rest of the world during the immediate Post-War period is useful in terms of setting the scene for the more specific analysis to follow. The history of Japan following the end of World War 2 is one that is deeply intertwined with that of the United States of America, not only through the country's period of direct occupation — which ended in 1952 — but through a marked political alignment that saw the Japanese government forging close ties with the USA with a specific focus on economic development (Perez 1998, 159). Importing modern production techniques such as quality control and improved technology, as Japan entered the 1950s, the country's businesses saw much success through the implementation of the lifetime

employment system, which guaranteed a job for life in return for employee loyalty (Henshall 2012, 162, 166, 182).

Between 1955 and 1968, Japan not only surpassed its pre-war economic levels, but rose to become the second biggest economy in the world. The 1960s saw the rise of a rampant consumer culture, with ordinary Japanese now becoming wealthy enough to afford convenient domestic appliances such as washing machines, air conditioners and televisions. (Stalker 2018, 344-351). The Tokyo Olympics in 1964 are often seen as marking Japan's re-admittance to the global stage, a year also marked by the opening of the first high-speed Bullet Train (*shinkansen*) routes across the country (Hood 2006, 2). The picture, then, is very much one of increasing affluence and an emphasis on good, honest hard-working values. With increased wealth came an increased need for goods to feed this consumer desire, as well as forms of entertainment to promote these goods and the lifestyles of which they could form a part. Against a backdrop of increasing Western influence, Japan was fast discovering that it was not just a case of how the country presented itself to the world, but also how it presented itself to its own people. What kind of Japan did the public see when they switched on their TVs every morning and evening? As consumers looked to the various composite forms of mass-media to tell them about the world around them, what did Japan look like, and perhaps more importantly to this particular study, what did it sound like? Looking for the origin of these images and sounds is important because it can give us a clearer picture of whether the subsequent trajectory of their popularity stemmed more from a genuine sense of grassroots popularity, or if they were cleverly guided from on high via governmental or industrial influence.

The very terminology of a Japanese Post-War itself implies a clear divide between a before and after, and it is against this backdrop that we seek to question whether a similar degree of division can be said to have existed when it comes to music's application to anime and subsequent popularisation. The identification of shaping forces such as those outlined above is important because it lends a degree of systematic purposefulness to the narrative of what — on the surface — appear as populist, mass market mediums. As this chapter will look to suggest however, this purposefulness was inclined to mean different things to different audiences at different points in time — a national music, of sorts, but one in which the constant process of 'growing up' ran in tandem with the nation all around it.

Part 1 — Auditory adolescence – Children's songs and the birth of anime music

The fundamental paradox at work here is that, while we might seek to identify a 'ground zero' or origin point for the emergence of anime (as we understand it stylistically today) in the early 1960s, it is clear that for both anime and its accompanying music to emerge in the first place, they must have come from *somewhere*. While the lengthy 'pre-history' of anime has been explored in much depth in works such as Clements' *Anime: A History*, the question of how music fits into this equation is harder to answer. Partly, this is because the Post-War period of the fifties and sixties has often been seen as a kind of watershed moment or 'significant turning point' (Bourdagh 2012, 3) for Japanese music that marks a clear divide between the contemporary Japanese music identity that persists to this day (by which we mean a sense of a commercially orientated national music industry centered around mass-market output that draws its genealogy from a multitude of imported musical forms such as pop, rock and jazz), and everything that came before it. I would argue here that, in fact, this shift was far more gradual, and that the seeds of popular song that flowered in the 1960s had arguably been sown a hundred years earlier in the aftermath of the Meiji Restoration (1868) when Japan began to comprehensively look to Western nations as part of a drive to rapidly modernise. Central to this narrative of change is the role played by children's music (and by association, music linked with education or a societal cause), and how this lay at the heart of what would become the primary accompaniment for anime series in their early years.

For the first part of this study, I will focus primarily on the televised series *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*, lit. Mighty Atom). *Astro Boy* originally began as a comic book (manga) series written and illustrated by Osamu Tezuka, a figure often cited as the 'god of manga' (Cohn 2010, 188), such was his influence on the development of the medium. The comic book series ran in publisher Kobunsha's *Shōnen* magazine from 1952 to 1968, and was adapted into its anime incarnation in 1963, airing in black-and-white on Fuji TV for a total of 193 episodes across four years. Set in the year 2000, *Astro Boy* begins with a surprisingly grim premise for what is ostensibly material aimed at children. Dr. Tenma, a scientist specialising in precision machinery, is distraught when his only son is killed in a car crash. Unable to overcome his grief, he creates a robot in the image of his son. Despite the robot's remarkable capabilities, more advanced than anything the public has seen to date, Dr. Tenma is quickly disillusioned, the robot does not grow, as a real human boy would, and he ultimately sells his creation to a circus. It is here that the robot takes on its titular moniker, *Astro Boy*, and the show follows his continuing adventures as he does battle with evil and strives for peace (Schodt 2007, 36-41).

For all his diminutive stature as a child robot, the figure of Osamu Tezuka's beloved creation *Astro Boy* looms large over any history of the anime industry's formative years in the 1960s. Tezuka himself is seen as the generative engine for the systemisation of the anime industry, famously ascribed with the introduction of the hectic schedule and low pay that persist for animation industry staff to this day (Schodt 2007, 67). But part of Tezuka's genius was undoubtedly not only his skill as a creator of characters and narratives, but his understanding that for these characters to reach a maximum degree of proliferation, they would need to harness more than a simple transition from the comic book medium to that of the television screen. The process would also need to involve a full panoply of merchandising that would allow *Astro Boy* to transition from his fantasy on-screen world to the physical world of his viewers. In this manner, Tezuka was truly similar to Walt Disney, the figure he is invariably (and understandably) compared to in American animation.

Marc Steinberg situates *Astro Boy* as the locus of his illustration of 'Media Mix', a theory that has come to be central to much of the current academic discourse on anime. Indeed, the importance of *Astro Boy* to the history of anime and the concept of media mix is made plain by the fact Steinberg devotes an entire half of his book to the show. The title of this lengthy chapter, 'anime transformations' (Steinberg 2012, xix), also highlights that he is aware not only of the transformative effect the show had on the industry, but in a more literal sense, how the character of *Astro Boy* himself was transposed across a variety of mediums. Steinberg goes on to say that anime is 'inherently transmedial, crossing to multiple media platforms and material objects' (2012, 8). The suggestion is that there is something particular and potentially unique to anime as a medium or style that allows it to move more fluidly, and with more frequency than others. There is a plasticity to it that allows this refashioning and remodeling with an ease that transcends non-cartoon content. In this respect, Steinberg's ideas are useful because they can not only be applied to the more obvious efforts at associative marketing (such as co-branded toys or character goods), but also, by extension, any other associated paraphernalia attached to the core media property. In this respect, we can view *Astro Boy's* music — in this instance its opening theme song — as another link in the show's wider media mix and its ability to function in the paratextual manner Genette identifies as so powerful in its capacity to 'surround' and 'extend' (Genette 1997, 1).

Steinberg sees the interrelation of *Astro Boy* with these forms of commerciality as flowing two ways. The show is not merely a singular stylistic origin point from which all else followed, but rather, a kind of nexus amid a web of connections that extended both backward and forward in time. Steinberg notes that 'animation for television commercials truly fostered the growth of postwar Japanese animation, and especially TV anime' (2012, 12). It is important

to note here - in relation to Jason Cody Douglass' important rethinking of Japanese animation history through early animated television commercials (2019, 213, 216) - that while many of these commercial were stop-motion in nature and used puppets rather than being cel animated in style, I would argue that their lack of narrative does not necessarily equate with a lack of *message*. Thus, *Astro Boy* can be seen as both a child of a pre-existing system of animated TV commercials in Japan, but also as something potentially exemplary and beyond the multitude of potential animated styles that existed at the point of its gestation; a kind of galvanising influence that led to a doubling-down of commercial output in relation to animated televisual content. By creating a kind of historical 'lineage' between animated TV commercials and anime itself, we might read a similar kind of creative DNA within the accompanying theme tunes too, functioning as a kind of mini commercial or 'jingle', their content and form defined by particular functional parameters of what they are 'designed' to do. Again, Douglass' account of Japanese advertising in the years preceding the broadcast of *Astro Boy* is useful here, citing the first Japanese Coca-Cola commercial as soundtracked by a 'repetitive commercial song' that 'drives home a single message' via lyrics that translated into English would read: '*let's drink Coca-Cola, chill the Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola, everyone all together Coca-Cola, refreshing Coca-Cola*' (Douglass 2019, 216). As an aside, we might draw a comparison with how Hollywood directors such as David Fincher and Ridley Scott started out in the worlds of music video and advertising before transitioning to feature length productions.⁵ A proficiency with short form, overtly commercially-driven content can be seen as acting as a creative crucible for talent to then bring that same skill set to bear in longer form output. Just as movie trailers are designed as compact 'hooks' to get us to watch the entire film, opening theme sequences thrill precisely because of their concise nature, a *de rigeur* imposition of length which typically necessitates fast cutting, synchronicity with the pace of the music and a general sense that what is being shown offers the highlights (or at the very least, a flavour) of what is to come.

To this end, a close reading *Astro Boy's* original 1963 Japanese opening sequence and its accompanying theme song are insightful not only for showing how the archetypical ingredients of the format were clearly present even during these formative years of the medium, but also how the use of particular kinds of auditory or visual ingredients can contain inbuilt meaning. The opening sequence begins with *Astro Boy's* smiling face bursting onto the screen against a glowing starburst backdrop of light and shade, a chime-like melody

⁵ David Fincher (1962-) directed the music videos for Madonna's *Express Yourself* (1989) and *Vogue* (1990) before going on to wider acclaim with his feature film debut *Alien 3* (1992), followed by *Seven* (1995) and *Fight Club* (1999). Ridley Scott (1937-) is well remembered for his TV adverts for Hovis (1973) and Apple (1984) as well as iconic films such as *Alien* (1979) and *Blade Runner* (1982).

ascending in pitch as if to signal 'It's time!'. Our plucky hero then takes flight, and the opening theme begins in earnest, a cheery brass-band march accompanying scenes of Astro propelling himself through the sky as an energetic children's choir sing of the exciting adventures to come. The lyrics strike an equal balance between breathless excitement at Astro's technical capabilities ('*A child of science, 100,000 horsepower...*') and admiration for his gentle nature, we are told of his '*kind*', '*true*' heart and that he is '*everyone's friend*'. We then see Astro fly across oceans, mountains and forests, as well as matching the speed of — and then overtaking — jet planes and bullet trains. The theme ends on a triumphant note, *Astro Boy* landing in a futuristic-looking city and posing, fists raised, his (artificial) muscles bared for all to see.

In his study, Steinberg identifies a clear thrill in the 'coordination' of the theme song with the speedy, high-octane sequences of *Astro Boy* flying through the sky, noting that these scenes 'were in some ways the most intense of the series' (2012, 77). Indeed, the song's popularity and iconic nature to a generation of Japanese was such that when *Astro Boy* was remade in full-colour in 1980, the opening theme received the same treatment, re-produced in a bright, glossy new version that nevertheless retained the same melody and lyrics as the original. The only difference? It was now backed with a pulsing bassline and on-trend disco beat.

Steinberg is not alone in attributing significance to the pairing of music to animation. Hideko Haguchi notes the 'sophisticated interaction between... visuals and music' (Haguchi 2014, 174) as a core part of the lasting legacy and appeal of the iconic *Akira*,⁶ a film often cited as first popularising anime with adult audiences in America and Europe, and seen as immensely influential to this day. Crucially, it is not merely the presence of visuals and music that Haguchi singles out, but their 'interaction', implying that it is only in tandem, in symbiosis, that the true value of both is achieved. Elsewhere, Jolyon Baraka Thomas sees the role of music within film as one of a suite of techniques that differentiate the medium from text, observing that 'soundtracks and sound effects affect the emotional register of a given scene' in much the same way that use of camera angles can 'focus attention on specific details and obscure others' (Thomas 2012, 26). Here, we see music as a kind of emotional amplifier, a means of intensifying or altering the emotional quantity of the visuals. As Michel Chion puts it, it is precisely here that we find the 'expressive and informative *value* of sound' (Chion 2000, 112) (my emphasis), a distinct, measurable addition that in its nature

⁶ Landmark 1988 anime film directed by Katsuhiro Otomo, based on his own long-running manga series of the same name (1982-1990). The story of a dystopian future-Tokyo (at the time the most expensive anime film ever made) was one of the first to achieve widespread cult appeal amongst audiences outside of Japan and is to this day seen as one of the 'representative' works of the medium.

as something 'added', implies that the content would be lesser or lacking without its presence. Historically, this capacity for addition and emphasis would become part of the drive in the 1930s from silent era cinema to the sound era, with sound in essence 'leading' the image, for example in the instance of a cut motivated by the presence of an offscreen sound (Bordwell et al. 1985, 47) Steinberg also sees this value as extending beyond simply music, but to sound in general, vital in conveying energy not only to scenes of action such as *Astro Boy* flying, but more importantly, to static scenes in which there is little movement: 'In so many scenes of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, the character either moves its mouth little or not at all. Yet the dynamism of the voice alone carries the still or partially still image' (Steinberg 2012, 25). It is in this dynamism, this ability to 'carry' the visual content, that we can read clear motive power in the way audio content functions. Rather than being subsidiary to the visual element, in descriptions like this, it is arguably the auditory aspect that is doing the heavy lifting in conveying meaning to the viewer, the lifeblood providing power to the body which it flows through.

This capability for sound and music to 'activate' static visuals was not limited to the televised incarnation of the *Astro Boy* series. Central to Steinberg's case study of the media mix strategy is the character's partnership with chocolate brand Meiji, through what he describes as a 'total' marketing campaign involving TV commercials, newspapers, magazines and crucially, 'a bouncy theme song (which ran on the radio, was incorporated into TV commercials, and was even printed in newspaper ads in the form of lyrics and musical score)' (2012, 49). The latter point — of music's potential to appear even within non-musical mediums such as the printed page — is worth noting in terms of how it suggests instances of a single song taking on multiple instances or lives depending on its format, a point we will return to later. Taken as a whole, these innovative marketing techniques were seen as ushering in a 'new era' of media mix strategies which would go hand in hand with anime right on through into the 1970s (Zahlten 2017, 107). Indeed, it is this essence of the 'whole' or 'totality' that is central to both Steinberg's argument and my own, as he notes that the very key to the concept of media mix is that 'the popularity of a text or series in one medium leads to its accelerated consumption in another medium' (2012, 71). Through interrelation, a more thorough sense of completeness is achieved, both for the intellectual property itself — growing in financial and artistic value in its complexity — and for consumers of it, who feel a sense of satisfaction at owning or consuming 'more' of what is familiar and pleasurable to them. This interrelation would come full circle in the fact that *Shōnen* magazine — from which the *Astro Boy* manga originally stemmed — gave away *furoku* (freebies) with each issue, including amongst other things assemblable paper record players (2012, 107),

allowing fans to play the very same *Astro Boy* theme song they had fallen in love with watching the show.

Steinberg sees the popularity of early anime series like *Astro Boy* and the Japanese public's receptiveness to this mobilisation of its associated interlinked paraphernalia as the result of a 'reconfiguration of the existing media landscape', one which had already been primed for the 'rhythms of movement and stillness' present in animated content. For this he looks not only to the original source material — manga — but also the historical format of *kamishibai* (2012, 20), a kind of street theatre-cum-storytelling which would see a travelling narrator illustrate their tale with a series of slide show like painted boards. While Steinberg does discuss a certain kinship between *kamishibai* and early television in its blending of the visual and the auditory (2012, 23), if we are to consider specifically music as the 'soundtrack' to visuals, and not merely narration, the picture we are given is more ambiguous. If we are to believe the assertion that Japanese audiences had already been prepped for the kind of visual narrative delivered in anime through mediums like manga and *kamishibai*, then in what sense had they also been primed for the accompanying opening theme songs by the kinds of music already familiar to Japanese audiences?

To answer this question is to also unpack the complexities inherent in providing a definition of what exactly we mean when we talk of 'Japanese music'. At the heart of this is the distinction between what we might term 'traditional' Japanese music performed with instruments such as the *koto*, *shamisen*, *biwa* and *shakuhachi*,⁷ and the kinds of 'Western' music that arrived in Japan following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which saw an opening to foreign influence and the beginnings of Japan's rapid modernisation. By this rhetoric, *Astro Boy's* theme song — performed in the pop idiom with an accompaniment of Western instrumentation — belongs firmly to the latter camp. And yet, it is sung in Japanese, and at its time of release, roughly a hundred years on from the Meiji Restoration, we must ask if in those intervening years, a sense of what was 'Japanese' and what was 'Western', musically speaking, had long since already blurred.

Luciano Galliano's *Yogaku* provides a comprehensive study of Western music's introduction and subsequent amalgamation into the Japanese musical consciousness. He sees the arrival of a new set of rules, theories and nomenclatures — even the idea of figures such as that of a 'composer', in the sense of Western classical music — as one that while initially

⁷ These traditional instruments are often ascribed the following English descriptors: Koto (zither or harp), Shamisen (guitar or banjo), Biwa (lute), Shakuhachi (bamboo flute)

given a muted response, was quickly adopted by the wealthy classes as a sign of forward-thinking intellectualism (Galliano 2002, 16-33). Christian Morgner presents a similar account, stating that the emergence of this new 'Japanese music' was primarily not driven by musicians themselves, but instead by educators and policy makers pushing a clear agenda. This would culminate in 1907 with the establishment of the Tokyo Conservatory of Music and a number of music-dedicated magazines, primarily penned by employees of the Ministry of Education (Morgner 2019, 45). By the 1910s, Japan had its first classical orchestras and they quickly came to symbolise grandeur and power (Mehl 2014, 124-125), tying in the symbolism of classical music with not only a powerful moneyed elite, but an essence of newness and innovation from beyond Japan's borders. The next few decades saw the wholesale development of both a specifically Japanese music industry and a widening in the breadth of musical genres made available. British and American investment saw local branches of labels Columbia and Polydor⁸ established in 1927, whilst Tokyo quickly developed into a hub for inter-Asian distribution of jazz records from North America and Europe (Morgner 2019, 45).

It is in this era that scholars like Patrick Patterson begin to identify the agency of key figures such as Shinpei Nakayama, who he cites as one of Japan's first music producers (Patterson 2018, 140). Nakayama was notable in creating music with a focus on how it sounded on record as opposed to as heard live (2018, 140) — directly keying in to the new possibilities of 'mass musical manufacture' enabled by the technology of recorded music. Patterson goes on to note that figures such as Nakayama and other famous prewar composers including Masao Kōga were often dual figures, both composers and producers rolled into one. The impetus from their record label bosses was ultimately on creating material that would sell, a goal primarily aided by the creation of a formula that was 'unique, repeatable, and profitable', and by promoting a message that resonated with 'Japanese of all socioeconomic classes' (2018, 140). Aided by the technological advent of radio as well as the rise of domestic recording and manufacturing facilities for records, we can read Patterson's account of this era as one in which the concept of modern popular song takes on an identifiably Japanese nature.

From the Meiji period onward, the Japanese government had identified music as a key subject within the wider sphere of educating the nation's children, particularly in a moral and civic sense. Patterson discusses how this emphasis complicates the debate between

⁸ The American Columbia (established 1889) and the German-British Polydor (established 1913) remain to this day two of the most successful record label imprints in the world and are now respectively owned by the media conglomerates Sony and Universal.

whether children's songs occupy a strictly educational role, or despite this, are still fundamentally situated within the 'activities of capitalism'. The 1920s saw these ideas rise to the fore as music education for children in Japan was formally codified and discussions ranged back and forth about how prominently Western music should feature as the foundation of that education. Classical music was seen as fostering a sense of beauty in children, as well as calming excitable troublemakers and making them more 'receptive to the classroom environment' (2018, 148). Throughout this period, Nakayama was not only creating music, but also working as a teacher, and so was exposed first-hand to the role music could play in children's lives. It was also at this point in time that, seeing the popularity of music amongst children, Japan's Ministry of Education saw an opportunity for music's role as a tool of 'social management'. As 1920s Japan gave way to the increasingly nationalistic fervour of the wartime years, Nakayama notably backed away from his compositional duties, unwilling to create songs that would be propagandist or militaristic in nature (2018, 147-153).

Patterson's account closes with the death of Nakayama in 1952, almost exactly a decade prior to the first broadcast of *Astro Boy*. In the immediate Post-War era, what kind of musical landscape had Japan been left with? The continuing influence of the West was notable, with genres such as boogie-woogie, rockabilly and jazz being spurred on by the influence of occupying American forces. Patterson identifies two key trends leading into the 1960s, a marked nostalgia for pre-war popular songs, but also a rise in youth-orientated material influenced by Western styles such as rock and roll (2018, 164). The intersection of these two trends, I argue, laid the groundwork for the kind of sound promoted by the earliest anime TV themes such as that used by *Astro Boy*, at once both nostalgic in their echoing of earlier styles, but also inherently youth-oriented in nature. By capturing both these essences together, the songs could ensure their popularity with the widest possible audience.

Against the historical backdrop of Post-War Japan, why is anime, specifically, so important to consider within the wider socio-cultural picture of popular taste and consumption habits? The answer lies in the remarkably rapid uptake of television as a medium of mass entertainment. In 1960, only 55 percent of Japanese households owned a TV set. By 1964, that figure had ballooned to 95 percent, a boom many owe to both Crown Prince Akihito's⁹ televised wedding in 1959 and the 1964 Olympics (Steinberg 2012, 10). The populace of Japan was evidently keen to engage with a wider sense of the country as a whole, and with a nation of viewers primed and ready, the stage was set for a rollout of content targeting that

⁹ Akihito (1933-) would go on to reign as Japan's Emperor from 1989-2019. His marriage in 1959 to commoner Michiko Shōda would mark the culmination of what the Japanese media dubbed a 'fairytale romance'.

new audience. Just as the advent of new technologies such as radio and record players had prompted the spread and popularisation of new forms of music, so too did television. Animated adaptations of manga series such as *Astro Boy* came with the added convenience of a pre-built audience keen to see their favourite characters make the transition from the pages of comic books to the screen.

Steinberg interrogates the unique possibilities of animation above and beyond older media forms such as manga and radio: 'The manga had image without voice, and the radio had voice without image. Neither infringed on the realm of the other, in effect splitting into distinct media what would become with anime the doubled body of the drawn image-real voice actor'. Music would add to this dynamic, filling in for — alongside the voice actors — the 'absent body' of real-life actors (2012, 69-72). Steinberg is keenly aware of the role this portability has in enabling a second life for the show beyond what is literally seen on screen.

We might sum this up as anymovement, anywhere, anytime. Branding their shoes, clothes, desks, ceilings, schoolbags, and books, the graphically immobile dynamism of the Atomu image was suddenly able to accompany young fans in all areas of their lives, always there to remind them of their favorite character and his narrative world. Unlike the TV show, which only aired once a week, or the manga, which was bulky and far less mobile, the sticker could be anywhere and everywhere, it was temporally and spatially mobile. (2012, 79)

Music takes things a step further, going beyond physical 'content' such as stickers and toys. It is quite literally the ultimate in 'portability', able to take on a life of its own in the hands of school children up and down the country humming along to the *Astro Boy* theme tune. It can be sung endlessly, refashioned and 'owned' in a way unique to each individual. This particular quality of music as the least tangible and most plastic of artforms (namely, its capacity to exist in an incredibly vast multitude of places, mediums and formats) is observed also by Melville, who envisions its capacities as especially well-suited to travel and sharing. He asks us to question what we mean when we talk of a 'piece' of music, of the routes it takes from its point of origin to its eventual destination, and beyond (Melville 2015, 209-211). What starts with a certain significance for one listener may take on an entirely different meaning for another individual, so that we might consider each instance of listening simply a 'piece' of an entire whole. When Steinberg talks of a creative, narrative world which young fans can inhabit alongside *Astro Boy*, we must also consider an auditory world operating as part of this anime play-world too, to assume otherwise is to suggest that these playful worlds

are not only silent, but without the expressive and informative qualities discussed earlier that sound can lend to image.

In this sense, we draw closer to an understanding of the use value of music as one that takes on unique significance in the hands of each individual as they hear it, tied to a conception of the song 'overall', our engagement with it and how that engagement interlocks with others. This clearly holds meaning for an imagined 'Japan' — a conception of the nation as an entirety or whole — growing to prosperity in the Post-War era, we can read, for example, an implied union and communality in terms such as 'national anthem'. But there is meaning too for each individual as part of that entire population. Our taste in, and sense of ownership over, the music we choose to engage with or unconsciously encounter in our day to day lives helps form our sense of who we are. As we grow older, that relationship changes, songs that were once everyday listening become stale, in time, tinged with nostalgia. Our tastes change, or are changed in line with wider trends. From that, we form pieces of ourselves too, youth giving way to teenagerhood, the sense of ourselves as children in an eternal present transposed to a searching for the adult we will someday become in the future. In this manner, we are 'marking maturity' in the way we engage with music, and as the sixties drew to a close in Japan, analysing the changing trends in the anime music popular at that time helps in identifying a shift toward a specific auditory adolescence.

While the vast majority of anime series in the 1960s utilised opening theme songs that possessed a youthful feel (either directly sung by children, or in a childlike manner), a number of outliers marked an emergence of something very different. Toward the end of the decade, two shows in particular were symptomatic of this — professional wrestling series *Tiger Mask (Taigā Masuku)*,¹⁰ aimed at young boys, and pioneering magical girl series *Secret Akko-chan (Himitsu no Akko-chan)*,¹¹ aimed at young girls. These two shows utilised far more mature-sounding material, with powerful, adult vocals hinting toward both their adolescent audiences and the sense that anime itself — as a medium — was rapidly

¹⁰ *Tiger Mask* aired 1969-1971, Yomiuri TV/TV Asahi. Tells the story of the titular professional wrestler 'Tiger Mask', aka Naoko Date, who makes the transition from a villainous bad boy of the wrestling ring to heroic figure after hearing the story of a young boy raised in an orphanage who has grown up idolising Tiger Mask. A second series of the show would run in the early 1980s, while the franchise would see a resurgence in interest in the 2000s marked by a live action incarnation and new animated outing for the character, as well as numerous appearances in videogames.

¹¹ *Secret Akko-chan* aired 1969-1970, TV Asahi. Followed by two remakes in 1988 and 1998 on Fuji TV. The plot centres around the titular 'Akko-chan' — Atsuko Kagami — who gains the ability to transform into anything she wishes through the means of a magic mirror. This template would become the model for many subsequent 'magical girl' series such as Sailor Moon.

maturing. Studies such as Daniel Goldmark's *Tunes for 'Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon* have identified similar tonal distinctions between the visual and sonic aesthetic of animated content in the West, (2007, 3) and I would argue here that by self-consciously aiming for a more 'mature' sound, these series were instrumental in illustrating that anime music could represent something 'serious' in its own right, something more than just background music for cartoonish onscreen antics.

To better understand exactly what these new shows (and their accompanying theme songs) were shifting toward in the closing years of the 1960s, it is useful to first understand what they were shifting away from. My decision to focus on *Astro Boy's* opening theme in the first half of this chapter was not simply because of the show's fame, or importance to the history of anime, but because its theme tune was highly typical of other songs from the era in both style and content. Sung by the Kamitakada Boys' Choir, the song was one of a number of similar productions from the period that also included:

TV Series	Theme song sung by
<i>Ken The Wolf Boy</i> (Ookami Shōnen Ken, 1963-1965) ¹²	Nishirokugo Boys & Girls Choir
<i>Young Fujimaru The Wind Ninja</i> (Shōnen Ninja Kaze no Fujimaru, 1964-1965) ¹³	Nishirokugo Boys & Girls Choir
<i>Big X</i> (Biggu Ekkusu, 1964-1965) ¹⁴	Kamitakada Boys' Choir
<i>Space Ace</i> (Uchū Ēsu, 1965-1966) ¹⁵	Suginami Junior Choir

Figure 1: Anime series of the 1960s and the children's choirs that sung their opening themes.¹⁶

¹² *Ken The Wolf Boy* aired 1963-1965, TV Asahi. A tale in the vein of *Jungle Book* in which young boy Ken is brought up by wolves in the jungle. The series follows his adventures with two young wolves, Chi Chi and Po Po.

¹³ *Young Fujimaru The Wind Ninja* aired 1964-1965, TV Asahi. Kidnapped and rescued by a ninja, the series follows the story of the titular Fujimaru as he seeks to reunite with his mother, learning a plethora of martial arts techniques in the process.

¹⁴ *Big X* aired 1964-1965, Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS). Invited to Nazi Germany during World War II, a Japanese doctor is asked by Hitler to collaborate on the mysterious 'Project X', a drug with the power to expand the human body beyond all possible limits.

¹⁵ *Space Ace* aired 1965-1966, Fuji TV. An undersea source of mysterious radiation is found to in fact be an alien from a distant planet on the verge of extinction. The alien — Ace — becomes a friend to Earth and repeatedly does battle with invaders from space.

¹⁶ All translations of show titles listed here, as in the rest of this chapter, are taken from Clements, J., & McCarthy, H. (2015). *The anime encyclopedia: A century of Japanese animation*. Information regarding the air dates and theme song choirs for the respective shows is taken from Anime News Network's online encyclopedia: <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia>

These choirs, or *Gasshō-dan*, were typically local outfits (as identified by their names), drawn from the Tokyo suburbs where the animation production studios themselves were based. More specifically, their status as junior choirs only serves to amplify the youthful feel of the material they are singing, the vocals are typically high-pitched, fast-paced and chant-like in nature, lending them an anthemic, marching-band like quality. The choice of school-age choirs as the singers for the material also makes plain the priorities of the studio, quick, functional output of the material with a punchy, 'big' sound of massed vocals levelling out questions of vocal technique, talent or audio fidelity. While the practice of using 'dedicated' vocal talent that specialised in singing anime themes, or big-name pop stars who could lend their fame to the material, would become widespread in subsequent years, in the early sixties, the song itself, as opposed to the singer, was clearly the priority.

Can we identify the missing link between the historical rise of Western musical influences in the early 20th century, outlined earlier, and the arrival of anime theme songs in the Post-War era? Shinobu Oku identifies a possible connection in her study *Music Education in Japan*, identifying the *Astro Boy* opening theme as typical of early TV theme tunes that could trace their musical pedigree back to *Monbusho-Shoka*, songs published in school textbooks by the Japanese Ministry of Education between 1910 and the start of the Second World War (Oku 1994, 32). These songs typically featured a predominantly major key, an accompaniment of classical functional harmony, a two-part structure comprised of four phrases, each of which was comprised of four bars. Lastly, they were typically sung in unison by a choir of boys and girls. Oku then observes a marked change from the late sixties onwards, whereby TV theme tunes increasingly became influenced by mainstream pop songs designed for adults. This included genres as disparate as the more traditionally 'Japanese' Enka, or the American-sounding New Music (an amalgam encompassing folk, soft rock and disco). Across the seventies and into the eighties, Oku notes an increase in the use of English lyrics, faster tempos, more minor keys, more complicated structures and a more rock-orientated style, both in terms of instrumentation and vocal delivery (1994, 36).

Taken as a whole, we can interpret Oku's study as an attempt to use a musicological methodology to trace lineages between Pre-War children's music and TV themes in Japan. But while this approach can be useful in terms of telling us about the sonic make-up of the material from a technical standpoint, it misses both the wider socio-cultural function and aesthetic 'pleasure' of the songs. The study lays out how the songs 'sound' on a technical level, but not necessarily what they *feel* like. Much like Steinberg's own attempt to draw out historical lineages between the Pre- and Post- War eras through the mediums of *kamishibai*

and manga, Oku's study and methodology only tell us part of the 'total' picture. To glean a better understanding, we need to take a sample of the kind of material that captures the transformation Oku sees between more child-orientated material in the sixties, and an increasing maturity in the years that follow. In doing so, we might envision the motivating forces behind these changes, and not just what those changes sounded like.

In the early sixties, the opening theme of *Astro Boy* proclaimed openly and joyously how the titular character was 'everyone's friend' — the show at its peak was watched by more than 40% of the entire Japanese population (Yamamoto 1989, 205). However, by the end of the decade, it was becoming more and more clear that the trend in animated televisual content was shifting toward shows targeting more tightly specified audiences, those segmented along the lines of genre and gender. One of the most notable examples of this came in the form of *Secret Akko-chan*, famed for being one of the earliest examples of the 'magical girl' genre which would later become a staple within anime. The story of a youthful schoolgirl with an affinity for mirrors, the titular Akko (her surname, Kagami, is quite literally the Japanese word for 'mirror') is contacted in her dreams by a spirit who gifts her a magical mirror that allows her to transform herself into anything she desires. Originally running as a manga in girls' magazine *Ribon* from 1962 to 1965, it was adapted as an anime in 1969. At first glance, the show's opening theme seems to remain very much within the realm of children's fare, with its repetitive lyrics and the name of the title character prominently featured, much like *Astro Boy* did. But beneath this fluffy, pastel-toned exterior, there lies a coquettish core, singer Kyoko Okada crooning '*From the mirror, Princess Cinderella has appeared, who is thaaaa-t...?*', languidly drawing out the final syllable before concluding '*That's a secret, secret, secret... That's Secret Akko-chan!*'. This ostensible feminine maturity — knowingly coquettish in nature — was clearly aimed at young girls growing into teenagerhood at precisely the time the show aired, discovering their own 'secrets' as well as the 'magic' that emanated from knowing how to use a mirror (more specifically, a make-up compact) to enhance their own beauty.

Tiger Mask, in stark contrast, is a very different animal. For every bit of femininity *Secret Akko-chan* offers, *Tiger Mask* puts forth an equal masculinity. *Tiger Mask's* theme song sounds like an offcut from a Sergio Leone spaghetti Western soundtrack, all strummed guitars, languid string sections and horns, it offers an epic quality quite apart from the more playful boyhood-adventure feel of *Astro Boy*. It is made clear this is a Man's World, full of fast cars, knuckle-dusters, blood and strangling chokeholds — our hero is impelled by the lyrics to '*strike hard with the force of justice*' as the theme is punctuated by the sound of fists making contact as well as the roar of appreciative crowds. This live-ness, in conjunction with

singer Hiroshi Nitta's deep, sonorous vocal delivery, makes for a memorable package, and the show's cocktail of serious combat sport would see similar series like the famed *Tomorrow's Joe*¹⁷ propelled to even greater success in the years to follow. While *Astro Boy* had ostensibly also been a *shōnen* title, the fact that its initial manga run was followed by a newspaper serialisation between 1967-1969 highlights the fact that its audience and tone were far more universal in nature, as do comments from Tezuka himself that suggest the character was originally supposed to be a 'beautiful female android' (Galbraith 2019, 85). Just as *Astro Boy* himself was a facsimile of a real boy, the 'boyhood' the show offered was far more a stand-in for a general sense of 'youth'. *Tiger Mask*, on the other hand, was far more marked in its masculinity. Its source manga originally appeared in *Bokura Magazine* (literally, 'Our Magazine' — using the plural form of the specifically masculine first person identifier in Japanese), before transferring to Kodansha's *Weekly Shōnen Magazine* in 1970, illustrative of an increasing portfolio of magazines dedicated to a male readership.

What both *Tiger Mask* and *Akko-chan's Secret* have in common is the approach taken by their opening themes, representing a stark move away from the kind of choir-driven openings typified by *Astro Boy* and its contemporaries. Whether aiming at girls or boys, the anime industry was collectively moving toward a newly mature kind of auditory adolescence, one which centred around 'named' solo singers, as opposed to anonymous, massed choirs brought in simply because they were easy to source locally for the animation production staff. The songs had suddenly become 'serious', and to understand why questions of seriousness in relation to music are important, it is useful to observe similar discussions in Goldmark's study *Tunes for 'Toons': Music and the Hollywood Cartoon*. Taking American animation of the 1930s-1950s as his focus, Goldmark observes a constant battle against the assumption that 'film music should be experienced and not "heard"' (Goldmark 2007, 48). Rare outliers such as Walt Disney's acclaimed *Fantasia* (1940) fought for a 'high-art aesthetic' in their reverence for and promotion of the classical music canon, 'thereby helping music educators to shore up their position against the ever-growing interest in swing, race records, and other forms of popular music' (2007, 130). But for the most part, composers working on music for animation would stick to a systematic, functional model of 'gestural immediacy', similar in manner to Steinberg's observations of how *Astro Boy's* music contained the ability to inject life into its animation. For Goldmark, this equation could be summarised as 'connecting a tune with a visual idea, enabling them to give a sense of

¹⁷ *Tomorrow's Joe* (*Ashita no Joe*) aired 1970-1971, Fuji TV. A rebellious youngster, Joe Yabuki, is taken under the wing of a former boxing coach turned alcoholic who seeks to transform into Japan's greatest ever boxer. Originally adapted from a manga running in Kodansha's *Weekly Shōnen Magazine*, the series would be followed by numerous film outings and a second series (1980-1981).

completion to each gesture, at once aural and visual' (2007, 110). Commercial-like in nature, the short time constraints of cartoon music ensured a constant need for immediacy and instant melodic memorability, these were 'tunes', not songs. Thus, by looking to the newly 'matured' sound of opening themes such as those for *Tiger Mask* and *Secret Akko-chan*, we get a sense of increasing awareness that these songs really might have a life beyond the show itself, that their purpose need not be limited to 'advertising'.

Above, we have already seen how, toward the tail end of the sixties, the anime industry was beginning to engage with the idea of categorising and stratifying its output along gender-based demarcations. In the seventies, this would become even more pronounced as genre content further solidified what audiences expected in terms of their familiarity with what they were watching and listening to. For *Astro Boy*, its opening theme functioned as an epitome of the media mix approach, a jingle-like advert for the show itself, a memorable ear-worm for audiences to carry with them throughout the day. But as anime music began to aim at more mature audiences, it also sought to occupy a space where that audience was a select group, as opposed to an idealised national whole. Against this backdrop, its newfound sophistication would present a challenging new diametric, one in which its status as commercial product would become tangled with a dawning awareness of whether it could also be considered a form of 'art'.

Part 2 — Selling the 1970s sound — The symbiotic rise of 'genre' content

The continuing maturation of the anime industry throughout the 1970s came in tandem with an increasing sophistication and degree of variety offered by the Japanese music industry. More importantly, by the seventies, the Japanese music industry had moved away from a mechanistic aping of imported Western music toward an individual identity that, while still profoundly influenced by Western music, had melded this into a thoroughly 'Japanese' sonic aesthetic. This sound would ultimately solidify into what would come to be known in the eighties as J-Pop — but for the time being, anime music provided a creative hotbed for musicians and composers to experiment with a wide range of genres ranging from sensual lounge pop right on through to disco, rock and folk music. Anime, too, would be marked by a corresponding genre-fiction as it progressed to a more systemised understanding of offering audiences more of what the industry knew they would enjoy.

For the second part of this chapter, I will put forward a theory of symbiosis that looks to observe how this trend of increasingly diverse content proliferating through the anime industry in the 1970s in fact went hand in hand with a corresponding convergence toward a

more systemised, capitalistic engine of manufactured desire. While this might suggest a more typical reading of 'value' in the economic sense, my goal here is to demonstrate that in fact, the value of anime music was based on a more sophisticated nuancing of desire, one that functioned not only in a material sense, but sought constantly to establish networks of familiarity and inter-object communication.

To do this, I will primarily situate my argument in relation to Adorno and Eisler's classic study *Composing for the Films*. First published in 1947 at a time when the Hollywood studio system dominated current discourse of film production and consumption, the book is highly critical of the capitalistic drive behind this system. Adorno and Eisler saw the intersection of the two systems of music and film, and the corresponding tension between their status as either art or product, as one that could be traced back critically to the Wagnerian trend of the previous century. One of the core components of Richard Wagner's (1813-1883) compositional style was his theory of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total or composite works of art, embracing and synthesising as many disparate forms as possible into one 'whole'), which he put forth in two essays, *Art and Revolution* and *The Artwork of the Future*. The theory proved controversial at the time and was rebutted by figures such as Leo Tolstoy in his essay *What Is Art?*, where he argued that the combinatory nature of Wagner's dramas made it impossible for regular audiences to comprehend the 'whole' without a consummate knowledge of all the individual parts (Tolstoy 1995, 101-112).

To get to the bottom of the idea of a 'total' work of art is to interrogate the question of which component art form achieves the greatest degree of primacy within that totality. Does the music accompany the visuals, or do the visuals accompany the music? Is the music merely the 'lackey', announcing the arrival of its master, as Adorno and Eisler wryly put it (1994, 6). Graham McCann, in his introduction to the Athlone Press edition of their study, notes that it is precisely because Adorno and Eisler's approach to movie music is so cynical of its motivations that it is important. It is this very instance of critique — positive or negative — that is to be so rarely found, and that movie music itself is rarely taken seriously (1994, viii). Indeed, of particular relevance to my study, Adorno and Eisler save some of their most intense vitriol for opening theme sequences. They see title sequences as a 'fanfare', their action reduced purely to 'advertising', nothing more (1994, 60). For them, the true value of the music becomes obscured because, shackled to its parent body, it is not allowed to function on its own.

Conversely, there is a glimmer of hope to be found in the medium of animation. Adorno and Eisler see a 'certain charm' in the ability of 'animated cartoons... to stress the absurdity of something impossible' through the use of disproportionate means, such as the pairing of a serious piece of classical music to a comic scene (1994, 17). Later, they also see potential in animation to capture, like ballet, 'the tangible and measurable rhythm of symmetrical optical structures', ultimately articulating a particular sense of aesthetic movement within the film. Goldmark concurs, stating that 'In fact, animation offers the perfect medium for realizing Wagner's hopes for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, since it sets no physical bounds to the animator's creativity' (Goldmark 2007, 132). In both instances, animation's creative 'plasmaticity' (Eisenstein, 83-84) above and beyond live action film allows it even greater freedom in its interaction with music. Its lack of 'physical bounds' is a perfect pairing to the intangible nature of music itself, the two artforms uniquely placed to capture, as Adorno and Eisler observed, the absurd, impossible or fantastical.

I would argue that this intangibility, and the role it allows both music and animation to play within the concept of the 'total' work of art, is similar to that which Steinberg sees when he discusses Henry Jenkins' ideas of 'convergence' — all forms of media pooling into one (Steinberg 2012, vii). Steinberg sees this convergence as a means of building 'media environments' — imagined spaces that are seen to represent not only the media ecology as 'system', but also the lived experience of said system by its users (2012, xi). This lived experience is one in which music can play a central role — after all, we are frequently heard to proclaim nostalgically that such and such tune was 'the soundtrack to our lives'. It is this same nostalgic quality that Adorno and Eisler also see as part of an inherently parasitic relationship between the content and its consumer, offering them a sentimental snapshot of an idealised past, whilst simultaneously profiting from it (Adorno and Eisler 1994, lii, 49). Steinberg, although less cynical in his verdict, also sees the concept of media environments as places inextricably linked to the wider forces of modern, industrialised capitalism. He draws on the work of Italian theorist Maurizio Lazzarato, who makes the point that 'capitalism no longer creates the product but rather creates the world in which the product exists' (Steinberg 2012, xvi). This world is one in which the population seeks constant relaxation through the content it consumes to redress the balance of energy expended through labour (whether in work or education), and it is precisely this constant need which acts as the core foundation of mass culture (Adorno and Eisler 1994, li). Steinberg ultimately concludes that 'the consumption-production system of late capitalism is needed more than ever' (Steinberg 2012, xvii). It is this 'need' that I will examine more closely in answering my key research question regarding the specific value music might add to the media mix. What is it that engenders our need for a piece of media over any other? Perhaps the answer lies

not in the individual components, but in a whole that — ascribing to a compulsive desire for completeness — cannot exist without all its parts working in tandem. Here, it is not so much that music is an appendage, but rather it is one of many essential organs making up a fully functioning ‘media body’.

This tension between art and commerce is one that is picked up on and observed in relation to the anime industry by Bolton, who questions whether the content created by mass culture are in fact simply ‘symptoms of our postmodern condition in which market forces have undermined individual agency’ (Bolton 2018, 37). He sees in the critique of iconic animation industry figure Hayao Miyazaki¹⁸ a sharp distinction between two specific ‘kinds’ of animated content in Japan, distinguishing between televised anime ‘as an industry and the animated film as a form of art’. In Miyazaki’s eyes, the style of cheap, limited animation and tight schedules perpetuated since *Astro Boy* and Osamu Tezuka’s studio Mushi Pro sets televised anime apart from the more ‘artistic’ medium of full-length theatrical features (2018, 237). On one hand, the market forces that perpetuate a systemised production system, and on the other, the kind of ‘individual agency’ typified by Miyazaki’s comments, whereby a consumer is able to distinguish one kind of content from another. However, I would argue that this distinction is further complicated by the concept of desire. Steinberg suggests that capitalistic systems integrate ‘subjects’ libidinal economies into that of the social whole’, but also acknowledges that this is entirely reliant on ‘teaching subjects how and what to desire’ (Steinberg 2012, 4). His answer is that the generation of this desire stems largely from ‘material ubiquity’ of a piece of content and its ‘proliferation across media forms’ (2012, 42). The irony here is that both models of desire, the systematic and the individual, ultimately rest on notions of taste and the cultivation of a sense of connoisseurship, the ability to distinguish ‘how and what’ to like alluded to by Steinberg. As I will attempt to illustrate in the following paragraphs, music would play a crucial role in this cultivation of desire, taste and connoisseurship amongst anime’s audiences of the 1970s, precisely because of its aptitude for this ubiquity and proliferation.

One of the core links between ubiquity and its capacity to create desire is touched on by Adorno and Eisler in regards to the idea of familiarity and its engendering through leitmotifs. Early on in their study, they discuss how the leitmotif had been popular since the days of Wagner, and its function as a kind of sonic trademark or symbol allows characters and emotions to ‘instantly be identified’ (Adorno and Eisler 1994, 4), more cynically noting that

¹⁸ Hayao Miyazaki (1941-). Co-Founded the acclaimed Studio Ghibli in 1985 and responsible for some of Japan’s best-loved animated films, including *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Spirited Away* (2001), the latter of which won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature.

they are often ‘drummed into the listener’s ear by persistent repetition’ and that the familiarity that this creates can often be a ‘substitute’ for genuine quality (1994, xxvi). They see this familiarity as fundamentally linked to the use of melody, or more specifically, a certain kind of ‘easy to listen to, singable’ melodiousness that is best summed up by the English word ‘tune’ (1994, 6-7). In *Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process*, Altman is also affirmative about the importance of ‘familiarity’ in terms of generating consumer desire both within a single piece of content, and on an industry-wide level. He too identifies Wagnerian-like theme music leitmotifs as creating a feeling akin to being at a rock concert, we anticipate hearing our ‘favourites’ and are thrilled when they finally arrive, delivering a punchline to punctuate the most dramatic scenes (Altman 1998, 220). Beyond this, familiarity can function on the level of an entire genre or sub-genre of content, a precursor of ‘If you like this, you’ll love...’ style recommendation systems that exploit easily emulated features-in-common to ensure audiences will be satisfied by what they see or hear (1998, 15). At the most obvious level, this occurs in the proliferation of countless direct sequels and spin-off properties, but clearly contains even wider capital potential when the successful features of those intellectual properties can be codified and spun out into ‘cycles’ of unrelated but highly similar material.

These trends became a quintessential part of Japan’s anime industry in the 1970s, most easily observed in relation to the Science Fiction genre. Analysing the 326 anime productions released in Japan from 1970-1979 (both TV series and films), 104 can be classified as Science Fiction, roughly a third of the overall figure.¹⁹ Many of the decade’s most famous shows (*Mobile Suit Gundam*,²⁰ *Space Pirate Captain Harlock*,²¹ *Space*

¹⁹ Genre classifications as listed in Anime News Network’s online encyclopedia:

<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/search/genreresults?w=series&w=movies&from=1970&to=1979&lic=&a=AA&a=OC&a=TA&a=MA&o=rating>

²⁰ *Mobile Suit Gundam (Kidō Senshi Gandamu)* aired 1979-1980, Nagoya Broadcasting Network/affiliated All-Nippon News Network stations. The perpetually popular sci-fi series features humans piloting immense robots amidst a backdrop of complex political machinations. The original series spawned a franchise that continues to this day with frequent new instalments and an accompanying range of assemblable plastic model figures.

²¹ *Space Pirate Captain Harlock (Uchū Kaizoku Kyaputen Hārokku)* aired 1978-1979, TV Asahi. Based on a manga by Leiji Matsumoto. In a distant future in which humanity is succumbing to en-masse *ennui*, Harlock and the crew of his starship the *Arcadia* do battle with humanity’s numerous oppressors.

Battleship Yamato,²² *Galaxy Express 999*,²³ *Mazinger Z*²⁴) fit neatly into this category, and their theme songs broadly stuck to a consistent typology, building on the epic, male vocal driven style showcased earlier with *Tiger Mask*. This dramatic ‘spread’ of genre content is important because viewed as a whole, it allows us to critique whether understanding genre is not so much a question of finding an origin point for a certain set of archetypal characteristics, but in observing how those characteristics come to proliferate on such a wide scale. Or, as Altman puts it, ‘What if genre were not the permanent product of a singular origin, but the by-product of an ongoing process?’ (Altman 1998, 54). While Altman’s discussion begins in relation to film genre specifically, his subsequent theorisation of ‘genre as process’ contains a universality to it that can be expanded to a wider understanding of ‘genre’ in and of itself, something subsequently alluded to in his book chapter ‘Cinema and Popular Song’ in which he discusses the idea of shared ‘cinema sound space’ between both filmic and musical genres. (Altman 2001, 26). The meaning here is clearly to be found in multitude, a recognisable filmic (or musical) style is only recognisable because enough permutations on a set formula exist for it to become so. Our capacity to neatly file a TV series into a box marked ‘Science Fiction’ is only possible because we have trained ourselves, through our knowledge of the wider ‘world’ of disparate kinds of content, that a certain set of characteristics come to signify a certain kind of content. We see clear echoes of both this and Altman’s idea of content ‘cycles’ in Otsuka Eiji’s discussion of the kind of ‘grand narrative’ created through the *Gundam* franchise.

As is often typical of science fiction franchises, the *Mobile Suit Gundam (Kidō Senshi Gandamu)*, original TV broadcast 1979-1980) series contains a vast amount of background narrative detail or ‘lore’ which can only be fully comprehended through consumption of multiple texts within the entire franchise. One of Otsuka Eiji’s key examples is a series of stickers included in Bikkuriman chocolates at the time, each sticker containing a character alongside a brief description. By collecting all 772 of these cards, fans could build up a broader meta-narrative of their favourite series (Eiji 2010, 102). In this respect, *Gundam* goes one further than the kind of merchandising seen earlier, while the candy and stickers

²² *Space Battleship Yamato (Uchū Senkan Yamato)* aired 1974-1975, Yomiuri TV. Humanity jets into space aboard a resurrected version of World War 2 era battleship, the *Yamato*, in an attempt to find a solution to reverse the radiation affecting Earth following its bombardment by hostile alien forces. Like *Mobile Suit Gundam*, the franchise persists to this day in a variety of new incarnations.

²³ *Galaxy Express 999 (Ginga Tetsudō Surī Nain)* aired 1978-1981, Fuji TV. Based on a manga by Leiji Matsumoto. In a world where humans have learnt how to transfer consciousness into impervious machine bodies, poor youngster Tetsuro Hoshino takes a ride on an intergalactic railway in search of the Andromeda Galaxy where said mechanical bodies are said to be given away for free.

²⁴ *Mazinger Z (Majingā Zetto)* aired 1972-1974, Fuji TV. Based on a manga by Go Nagai. The titular Mazinger Z — an enormous ‘super robot’ forged from metals taken from Japan’s Mt. Fuji — does battle with the forces of evil represented by the malevolent Dr. Hell and his assistant, Baron Ashura.

branded with *Astro Boy* merely contained the character's image, the *Gundam*-branded Bikkuriman chocolates contained image *plus* textual detail. Steinberg sees this as a kind of 'interobject communication', a relationship he sees as stemming all the way back to the writings of Marx, who suggested that the use-value of objects is not necessarily to be found in the objects themselves, but in their 'intercourse as commodities' and the exchange-value generated in the space in-between both the commodities themselves, and their consumers (Steinberg 2012, 129). Thus, it is not simply monetary price that dictates the value of objects like the Bikkuriman chocolates, but a separate use-value or ability to engender desire (potentially far higher than the monetary value) generated by the gap between the consumer and the 'potential' of owning both the card and the textual content it contains. It is this mode of 'relation between things', the communicatory capacity of both objects and those using them, that Steinberg sees as a core component of 'the anime system' (2012, 132).

Why was this increasing sophistication and maturation of the consumer-content dynamic in the 1970s so important to the history of the anime industry? Clements argues that while there was no single 'eureka point' that codified the tropes that have come to characterise what we recognise as anime, there is at the very least an identifiable tipping point located somewhere between the mid-sixties and mid-seventies (Clements 2017, 133), a view that tallies with Altman's earlier observation about genre being part of an ongoing process. The rise of genre stratification within anime saw Japan's *TV Guide* offer increasingly patchy cover placement to animated content (as opposed to live action shows) from the early seventies onwards, indicating not only a fall in overall viewership (less than 30% of the national audience, the barometer for a 'mainstream' hit) but also a struggle for consensus about what kinds of genre to feature, be it sports, science fiction or material aimed at girls (2017, 137). All this suggests that while the *overall* popularity of anime might not necessarily have been decreasing, viewers were becoming scattered amongst an increasingly diverse portfolio of shows, each individual niche or genre characterisable by its own set of tropes, and corresponding audience. This in turn implies a dynamic of choice, with an increasing diversity of shows, viewers would now need to 'choose' what kind of content they specifically liked, and to do so, would first need an awareness or familiarity with what characteristics prompted that desire. Bolton sees this dynamic through the lens of Toshio Okada's idea that devoted anime fans possess 'three eyes' of viewership that essentially see the viewer focusing in on and assigning value to the level of quality displayed across a variety of parameters showcased in the visual content. These three ways of looking encompass 'eyes' for style, technique and of connoisseurship. Honed through hours of consuming content, these three eyes enable the fan to 'distinguish and appreciate' the marked styles of particular creators, as well as understand the technical processes involved in bringing their

creations to the screen (Bolton 2018, 150). Indeed, we might emphasise the distinction that these individuals were no longer simply 'viewers', but through virtue of their ability to distinguish acutely between their likes and dislikes (and understand the rationale behind those choices) they were now in fact 'fans', exercising a far higher degree of connoisseurship in relation to their consumption habits.

One of the most useful ways of better understanding this concept of connoisseurship and, for the purposes of this study, how it relates to anime music specifically, comes in the form of Fred Patten's 'All Those Japanese Animation Soundtracks', originally written for the film music journal *CinemaScore*, and one of many essays collated in his book *Watching Anime, Reading Manga*. Patten's article feels like an exemplar of Melville's statement that histories of music exist as histories of technology and storage, in this instance in its focus on the vinyl record format as both responding to and responsible for evolutions in the way anime music was produced and consumed. Patten outlines, in a brief history of anime music stretching from the 1960s through to the 1980s, how the double-sided 45rpm 7-inch record was ideally suited to contain a show's opening theme on one side, and the closing theme on the other. The advent of improved sound quality and more musically sophisticated recordings in the seventies saw a swelling trend in 12 inch long-players containing a whole album's worth of music. This even presented an opportunity for the industry to engage with and 'canonise' the history of anime music itself, with a deluxe four-album box set 'The March of TV Cartoon Theme Songs' released in 1977 by Nippon Columbia containing a total of 80 songs canvassing everything from *Astro Boy* to the latest hit shows (Patten 2004, 91). Other anthology records grouped theme songs by genre or topic, for example, Patten notes the presence of a record devoted purely to themes from sci-fi 'giant robot' shows, as well as others centred around girls' romance cartoons or sports. In a strange incidence of anime music coming full circle and returning to the sound that typified early themes in the sixties, particularly popular themes were sometimes rescored for high school marching bands (2004, 92).

It is worth noting at this point that Patten's article also presents an interesting methodological tangent in the form of its inclusion of a partial discography of composers working on anime music. Comprising over forty individual names, the list not only provides a useful jumping off point for further biographical research of these creative talents, but offers a kind of 'sorting', allowing the reader to see which names were the most prolific in terms of output, and if trends can be observed in terms of similarity between the kinds of shows each composer was attached to (2004, 95-98). For example, amongst the many soundtracks for science

fiction shows listed, we can identify that composer Chumei Watanabe provided music for two of the decade's most iconic 'giant robot' shows, *Mazinger Z* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*. Patten even injects a degree of subjectivity into his findings, noting that 'those who have composed especially noteworthy symphonic scores, in our opinion, are indicated with a bullet' (2004, 95). In this respect, Patten's subjective engagement with anime music as both fan and scholar aligns him with the ideas of connoisseurship illustrated earlier, 'collecting' and categorising the list of composers, in a manner that would later be identified as typical of the 'database animal' mindset of anime fans (Azuma 2009).

What is also interesting is that, much like Clements in his discussion of what we recognise as 'anime', Patten finds the origin point of anime music problematic to situate historically. While he acknowledges the importance of 1963's *Astro Boy*, he sees it and the subsequent fifteen years of music for anime as little more than 'children's records' (Patten 2004, 89). Thus, like Oku, he sees a dramatic separation between the kinds of music created before and after the 1970s. Patten sees this transition as marked by a watershed moment in 1977 linked to the release of not only the theatrical outing of *Space Battleship Yamato (Uchū Senkan Yamato)*, a compilation film assembled from episodes of the TV series previously aired between 1974-1975), but also the first instalment in the *Star Wars* franchise (*A New Hope*, 1977) and its now iconic score composed by John Williams. Patten sees this moment of synchronicity as central to the maturation of both the kinds of anime music being made and the way it was marketed, jesting that 'it all started with John Williams' (2004, 89). It is worth noting that Patten sees the popularity of the *Space Battleship Yamato* soundtrack that accompanied the release of the film as a dovetailing of both good marketing on the part of the anime industry cashing in on the sci-fi boom of the late seventies, but also the notable 'quality' of the show's score itself. The producers of the film had looked to the recent success of a 'symphonic suite' of lushly re-orchestrated versions of John Williams' score for *Star Wars* and quickly issued a similar re-recording of the *Space Battleship Yamato* soundtrack.²⁵

The success of certain kinds of foreign cinema within Japan was certainly not lost on canny business executives. A crucial example is that of media tycoon Haruki Kadokawa, who became famous for backing grandiose big-budget film adaptations of popular Japanese novels in the 1980s. Kadokawa's approach was an epitome of the media-mix model, played

²⁵ In addition to Ashbaugh's (2010) comprehensive treatment of the *Space Battleship Yamato* franchise, discussion by Posadas (2014) gives further significance to the history of the franchise and can be read in tandem with the idea that the release of *Star Wars* in the 1970s helped in the start of a new kind of film production – the package unit system (Schatz 1993, 10) – which holds many similarities with the Japanese media mix system.

out on the largest of scales, his tight control of the various interlocking enterprises ensuring systematic, clockwork-like rollout of pop-cultural smashes. The inspiration for Haruki Kadokawa's adherence to the media-mix model is said to have come when he watched *The Graduate* (1967), charmed by the film's symbiotic interweaving of its narrative with Simon & Garfunkel's iconic pop song soundtrack as well as its subsequent success as a separately marketable record, he ultimately looked to emulate this within his own media empire (Zahlten 2017, 100). Examples like these are important because they help form part of a new narrative within the historiography of film studies that sees attention shift away from the traditional director-centric 'auteur theory' model, and toward an increased valuation of the role of other individual talents within the wider production staff. Discussions of this nature can be framed against a wider current of dialogue in film and media studies, such as that by Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson focusing on the division of labour in television (2015) and what they term 'precarious creativity' (2016). As part of a narrative centred around 'global media, local labour', their study deliberately shines the spotlight on traditionally obscured 'background' production roles, noting not only the often incredibly fragile wage conditions those at the lower end of the spectrum encounter (2016, 4-5) but also how 'shifting geographies of media production have also opened the door to opportunities for screen media workers' and governmental prioritisation of 'creative economies' (2016, 7). Similar discourses can be observed within the field of anime studies, with Mihara noting that studies of anime have typically overlooked businesspeople (Mihara 2020), while Rayna Denison is notable in attributing new significance to producer Toshio Suzuki's role within Studio Ghibli (Denison 2016, 68). Bolton notes in his own study that recent 'theories of anime' argue that:

Anime studies should focus less on individual films and more on individual characters across multiple platforms, less on individual film directors and more on collaborative teams of media producers, not just on the interpretation of works but on the circumstances of their production and distribution. (Bolton 2018, 199)

With this in mind, Patten's focus of the commercial impetus behind the marketing of *Space Battleship Yamato's* soundtrack gives valuable insight to the inner workings of the anime industry above and beyond a simple detailing of the contents themselves. Tellingly, the article features within the section of his book subtitled 'The Business of Anime', and it is this emphasis on 'business' that allows us to situate music as a key tool in the industry's strategies of engendering desire. However, while this focus on the business side of the anime industry is admirable, it is important to note one further aspect in our search for origin points in relation to anime music, namely, aesthetic influence. While *Space Battleship*

Yamato and its science-fiction contemporaries typify one understanding of 'genre' content in the seventies, by turning to the use of music in other genres, we can glean an insight into a very different kind of media environment, and the trajectory of creative talent it helped nurture.

Noriko Aso singles out anime series *The Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaiyu no Bara*, 1979-1980) as 'a pioneering entry in the development of anime aimed at a female audience', and symbolic of a set of recurring archetypes, namely, a woman adopting a 'masculine' identity and triumphing in a male world (Aso 2010, 151). Based on a manga by Riyoko Ikeda that ran in girls' comic *Margaret* from 1972-1973, the series tells the story of the fictional figure Oscar, at once both the head of Marie Antionette's royal guards, but also 'a woman raised as a man in order to fulfil her aristocratic father's need for an heir' (2010, 153). Aso's account of the series is interesting because she places particular emphasis on the show's opening theme, and the way it cultivated 'symbols' that would come to resonate with particular meaning for the show's female audience. Chief among these were the image of a rose, as well as the protagonist's naked body wrapped in razor-sharp thorns; a tantalising image of feminine pleasure mixed with pain. The song's lyrics, sung by Hiroko Suzuki, echo this blend of sensuality and agony: 'If love is pain, however much [it hurts], let us suffer together . . . / The more we suffer, the more our love will deepen' (Aso 2010, 153). Like *Akko-chan's Secret* before it, the *Rose of Versailles* and its opening theme thrive on a sense of 'shared knowledge' with its implied viewers, a sense that they are 'in' on the secret of its main character. By offering this sentiment up-front in the opening theme as a 'first impression', as Aso puts it, the viewer is given a weekly reinforcement of this privileged position of knowing. As viewer and fan, they exist both within the media world of the show, and without it; the theme song providing an aside to those who have been reading the manga and are thus armed with the foreknowledge of the plot they bring with them to the anime adaptation. In this manner, not only is the song's inherent catchiness reinforced, but through the crucial narrative repetition given in its lyrics, the theme song plays a significant role in emphasising and refining the meaning of the core text and its status as an adaptation.

Much like its science fiction equivalents, *The Rose of Versailles* occupied a position within a sophisticated media-mix environment in which music played a central role, most notably in the form of an accompanying stage musical production by the all-female Takarazuka Revue. With the series' themes of cross-dressing and gender ambiguity a strong match for the Takarazuka's own modus-operandi of female actor-singers playing both female and male roles, it is no surprise that *The Rose of Versailles* features heavily in the majority of scholarly

studies on Takarazuka (Brau 1990, Nakamura & Matsuo 2005, Shamooin 2007). The existence of *The Rose of Versailles* in the stage musical format highlights the capacity for the series' musical identity to transpose itself into the 'real' world, providing a physical locale to which female fans of the series could gravitate. This generation of a specifically female fanbase is important because it would in turn cultivate, alongside the establishment of the kinds of symbols analysed in relation to the anime version's opening theme, a certain kind of aesthetic 'language' in future female-centric Japanese televisual content. A generation of young girls who grew up watching romantic anime such as *The Rose of Versailles* in the 1970s would come of age in the late eighties and early nineties, primed and ready for this particular kind of pairing of music with heart-throbbing romantic content. Eva Tsai illustrates how this cyclicity of generational taste has helped inform the continuously evolving cycle of Japanese media content (Tsai 2004, 43-68), each generation in turn bringing with them a set of creative influences and aesthetic preferences, an enhanced connoisseurship that ultimately sees this talent turn from fan consumers to creators in their own right. This familiarity with the kinds of material that will resonate best with audiences similar to them in turn further refines and hones the aptitude for this material to hit home with audiences eager for more of the same, as well as further enmeshing the role of music within Japanese televisual culture.

Perhaps the answer to why the 1960s and 1970s could be seen as so crucial to the evolution of anisong as a category within Japan's musical history is that for a sense of awareness around what this music meant as part of a modern Japan to form, a sizeable body of material had to first be in place, something the rampant proliferation of anime and associated theme music was crucial in aiding. As with Patten and his discography of composers, this critical mass of observable material would contribute to the emergence of studies such as Fumio Koizumi's, which — using musicologist methodologies similar to Oku — sought to situate Japanese pop music from the seventies through to the eighties as fundamentally 'Japanese' simply because it employed the same pentatonic scale²⁶ present in much of traditional Japanese music (Lie 2012, 6). We return here to notions of symbols and connoisseurship — a desire to read familiarity in common archetypes and neatly box up a categorised 'kind' of content. In much the same way as Adorno's cynicism around machine-like mass culture, Bourdieu saw high art — as opposed to low art — as the location of true transformative effect (Prior 2005, 135), and it is perhaps here that we can understand the rationale of attempting to establish legitimacy by linking contemporary Japanese popular

²⁶ A pentatonic scale is comprised of five notes per octave, as opposed to the 'standard' heptatonic scale, which has seven. What has come to be called the 'Japanese scale' or 'Japanese mode' also uses five notes, and can be found commonly in traditional Japanese music.

music (the culture of the bourgeois) to traditional roots via codified musicologist discourse (high, elite art). However, I would suggest that the edifying, educational role Bourdieu saw as the transformational value of high art has its place in more popular mediums too — the subject of informed, appreciative connoisseurship is altered, certainly, but still reliant on a heightened understanding of form and content. If the value is to be found in transformation, then shifting notions of connoisseurship between high and low art offer a transformative value all of their own — or as Nick Prior puts it: ‘an accentuated modernity, a modernity maximized, a modernity where cultural forms are more mobile’ (2005, 135). Thus, we also have a sense of how what, during the seventies, was merely ‘Japanese pop’, could ultimately morph into and take on the sobriquet ‘J-Pop’ in subsequent decades (Michel 2018, 21-22), ultimately adopting and embracing the guise of a more marked, self-aware branding of its status as both ‘Japanese’ and ‘popular’.

This new confidence in Japan’s domestic music product would give rise to figures such as Yuji Ono, who Patten identifies as ‘one of Japan’s top modern jazz composers’. Very much a precursor to the kind of ‘all in one’ brand name figures that would rise to prominence in the world of anime music in the eighties and nineties, Ono was notable in that he contributed both songs and scored the soundtrack for the popular ongoing animated criminal caper series *Lupin III (Rupan Sansei)*.²⁷ Working in the style of ‘cocktail-lounge jazz’, Ono was foremost amongst the creative talent of the era in not only showing how anime could bridge the gap between ‘background music’ and popular song, but also that it could work readily outside the long established formats of ‘pop’ theme tunes and classical scoring. As a further nod to the rise of newly ‘popular’ genres, in 1978, the *Space Battleship Yamato* soundtrack was re-modelled yet again, this time matched to a disco beat (Patten 2004, 93).²⁸

Attempting to draw these increasingly disparate musical strands together in many ways highlights the core dynamic present within the anime industry and its music in the seventies, that of diversification. Through the cultivation of stratified audiences, drawn up along the lines of genre, gender and age, common aesthetic archetypes could quickly emerge, fulfilling and enforcing a desire for familiarity. While a cynical reading, such as that illustrated by Adorno and Eisler, would suggest a simple capitalist drive behind this cycle of increased

²⁷ *Lupin III*, original series aired 1971-1972, Yomiuri TV. Based on a manga by Kazuhiko Katō (also known as Monkey Punch) in which the Lupin character is the grandson of famed gentleman thief Arsene Lupin, as featured in French author Maurice Leblanc’s series of novels. Yuji Ono would soundtrack the franchise from the second series (1977) onward, and filmic outings would include the Hayao Miyazaki-directed *The Castle of Cagliostro* (1979).

²⁸ It is worth noting, as an aside, that the exact same thing happened to the Star Wars theme, with the release of the tribute album *Star Wars and Other Galactic Funk* in 1977 by American record producer Meco.

consumption, I would instead offer a more sophisticated nuancing of the equation. Yes, there is still a capitalist element at work, the proliferation of the media-mix model across a more and more diverse body of creative output suggests canny identification of new revenue streams by industry personnel. However, beyond this face value dimension, the development of an aesthetic eye (and ear) as well as the attitude of connoisseurship amongst audiences of anime — of which, music played a key role in reinforcing — we can in fact see a kind of reinforcement of *future* audiences. These viewers have been cultivated to desire a certain kind of content — very similarly to how Pierre Bourdieu describes the intermingling of the ‘learned’ and the ‘natural’ in our development of a sense of aesthetic taste (Loesberg 1993, 1040) — and in seeking that familiarity, ensure a lifespan for it stretching well into the future. They are actively selecting, choosing, but doing so precisely because that choice has been reinforced through the totality of the media-mix structures around them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have aimed to conceptualise the role and origins of the opening and ending theme songs for Japanese animation which have come to be termed ‘anisong’. As both musical appendages and functional auditory ‘prompts’ for the shows they accompany, as well as vocal-led songs in their own right, how might we consider this specific format within anime’s wider ‘media mix’ of ancillary, interlocking entities? Encompassing a variety of genres and styles, I put forward a case that ‘anisong’, for all that it ostensibly follows the received historical trajectory of the anime industry from the 1960s onwards, can also trace its respective lineages back into older manifestations of Japanese musicality.

Taking the economic boom years of Japan’s postwar decades as its central backdrop, this chapter examines the role of *Astro Boy* as a central work in both pre-existing studies by Clements and Steinberg, and suggests that its use of music was fundamental to how the show lent energy to and ‘activated’ the style of animation pioneered by its creator Osamu Tezuka. With its catchy theme song becoming archetypal of anime opening themes from the 1960s onwards, an examination of its lyrical content and the way the song served as a foundation for promotional activities such as giveaways of assemblable record-players places it at a clear intersection between emerging new media and older forms of Japanese audio-visual performance, such as that of *kamishibai*.

In order to further establish roots to the kind of musical manifestations seen in early anisong, I have sought to include a brief overview of the manner in which Western musical forms

were introduced to Japan following the Meiji Restoration of 1868. In the century between then and the debut of *Astro Boy* in the 1960s, I suggest that from the very outset, powerful agendas set by educators and policy makers saw music placed as a key element in the moral and civic development of the nation's children. By the 1960s, nostalgia for this kind of child-centric music, mingled with the impulse of new Western styles such as boogie-woogie, rockabilly and jazz, provided a hotbed for the kind of musical gestation represented by the earliest efforts in creating theme songs for anime. These tunes would form part of a new 'everyday' lived societal experience for Japan in which the all-encompassing nature of anime's growing media mix would not only encompass stickers, toys and merchandising, but also see local school choirs drafted in to sing these songs themselves. Indeed, as studies such as Oku's show, the popularisation of anime music would then in turn inform the musical trajectory Japan would take into subsequent decades, with the anime audience becoming further diversified and multigenerational, in turn leading to even greater diversification in anime music.

Against this backdrop, genre would take an increasingly important role in the development of anisong. With the maturation of the anime industry as Japan moved into the 1970s, a rapid spread in the volume and breadth of shows being created would lead to a corresponding growth in the kinds of musical style evidenced within anisong. Science Fiction in particular would be met with remarkable popularity, with many of the decade's most famous shows — *Mobile Suit Gundam*, *Space Captain Harlock*, *Space Battleship Yamato* — being met with fervour from audiences undergoing a crucial shift from being merely 'viewers' to 'fans' and an increasingly cultivated sense of taste and understanding of what they wanted from their favourite shows. This chimes with ideas expressed by Miller that 'identification' is central to the development of fan identity, as well as defining their relationship with the industry players responsible for the creation of the content they consume. This process is fundamentally active in nature, in which 'identification also exhibits performative qualities of citationality (the reference back to and subsequent shaping of cultural identities)' (Miller 2017, 51). Thus, it is in the implied degree of intensifying active consumption — a consumption informed by 'identification', that the kind of embodied cultural capital referred to earlier begins to manifest in relation to anime music. The dynamic put forward by Miller between the reference and subsequent identification is crucial here, as it is precisely here that the kind of through-routes I have sought to identify in this chapter can be found.

It is in this shift, I suggest, that we can understand the 'origins' of anisong as existing. Not within a single, defined point, but instead as an extended trajectory in which a synchronicity of market maturation bred recognisable and defined genres of musical leitmotifs in tandem

with expressed visual archetypes. With audiences diversified across lines of age, gender and taste, Japan's 'cultural priming' of its audiences to receive a certain type and style of musical accompaniment as 'anisong' return us to the very question of what we understand as a nation's 'popular music'. Therefore, armed with the supportive structures of the anime media mix, anisong too was given the means to hit its mark and establish itself amongst listeners who increasingly demanded a kind of content that held value precisely because it conformed to a kind of familiarity they had been trained to expect. In this sense, the origin — or rather origins — of anisong exist multiply. Nexuses of generative energy exist, certainly — such as in the televised debut of *Astro Boy* — but taken together, as the historical scope of this chapter has attempted to paint, there is a wider narrative to be told here, one in which it is the very demands and expectations of maturing audiences that have given rise to the medium they derive value from.

Chapter 2: Tetsuya Komuro — Musical aesthetic and aspiration in Japan's economic bubble

Introduction

The term 'anime' is used to refer to animation originating from Japan — traditionally hand-drawn and two-dimensional in nature, although now all drawn and composited on computer as well as increasingly incorporating 3D computer generated elements — and can be understood as a specific artistic style or medium, encompassing within it a wide spread of distinct genres. Although early examples of Japanese animation date back as far as the early 1900s, the beginnings of what is typically seen as 'anime' are generally linked to the work of Osamu Tezuka in 1960s, where — influenced by the Western animation of Walt Disney — he introduced many of the aesthetic archetypes now associated with anime. Historical accounts of the Japanese animation industry see the burst of activity in the 1960s surrounding the landmark release of Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy* (1963) as a watershed moment, marking the 'beginning of a new age in Japanese animation' (Clements 2013, 116). This was then followed by a 'long 1970s' — a gestation period of sorts, in which incremental technical and stylistic advances in anime-as-medium bubbled away beneath a veneer of relative stability (Clements 2013, 155). The 1980s, in contrast, saw change happening on a far more rapid, dynamic level. Expanding from 324²⁹ individual animated productions in the 1970s, production in the 1980s boomed to a total of 926³⁰ works across the decade, driven by a sudden expansion in 'adult-oriented' material and the commercial prospects entailed by the arrival of home video. Indeed, Japanese home-video sales of anime increased from 2.7 billion Yen in 1983 to 28.4 billion Yen in 1989, indicative of the booming economy of the time and the increased availability of investment capital which was working its way through the production system (Clements 2013, 157).

My core research question posits to what degree we can attribute a sense of 'value' — commercial or otherwise — to the use of music within anime. We can see an encapsulation

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<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/search/genreresults?w=series&w=movies&from=1970&to=1979&lic=&a=AA&a=OC&a=TA&a=MA&o=rating> (accessed 6 March 2019)

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<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/search/genreresults?w=series&w=movies&from=1980&to=1989&lic=&a=AA&a=OC&a=TA&a=MA&o=rating> (accessed 6 March 2019)

of a diverse spread of ‘value’ typologies in Pierre Bourdieu’s classic description of various kinds of capital, as put forward in *Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction* (1973) and expanded upon in *The Forms of Capital* (1986) as well as *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (1990). Of particular relevance to this chapter is what he sees as ‘embodied cultural capital’, and how its acquisition over time begins to impress upon a person’s sense of self and way of thinking. In turn, they then become more susceptible to similar cultural influences at play in the world around them (Bourdieu 1990, 114). How these cultural influences are produced, consumed (and re-produced) lies at the heart of the conception of ‘value’ I am interested in here. With this in mind, the monetary drive of the booming economy in 1980s Japan — and the consumer culture inextricably tied to it — provides the perfect backdrop in which to examine this. In an effort to construct a kind of preparatory ‘dry-run’ for the more detailed composer case-studies to follow in later chapters, I will look to focus my study of anime music in the 1980s on composer Tetsuya Komuro, whose music for anime such as *Vampire Hunter D*³¹ and *City Hunter*³² preceded his rise to fame as a multimillion-selling record producer for some of Japan’s biggest popstars in the 1990s. Komuro, in particular, is useful to focus on because his musical career incorporates both traditionally composed ‘background music’ (BGM) as well as the vocal-led ‘Opening’ and ‘Ending’ theme songs that invariably accompany anime, allowing us to trace evolutions in both the style and application of his music across a defined period of time.

In answering the above core question, we can also incorporate a number of connected research questions. Namely: Looking to historical precedent, in what ways can we identify the rise and subsequent perpetuation of anime music as a specific sub-genre and system within the wider anime and Japanese music industries? Likewise, in what ways does anime music exist as part of anime’s wider ‘media mix’, and how does this problematise its existence as either ‘art’ or ‘product’?

The desire to frame Komuro’s career through this kind of analysis influenced my decision to employ the Case Study as my core structural approach. This format is highly valuable in looking to conduct an inquiry into the relationship between a contemporary phenomenon and its real-life context, in particular when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are

³¹ *Vampire Hunter D (Vanpaia Hantā Dī)* was released as a direct-to-video feature length volume in 1985, based on the popular novel series by Hideyuki Kikuchi. Set in a dark post-nuclear holocaust future, a young woman hires the mysterious ‘D’ to protect her from the powerful vampire lord Count Lee.

³² *City Hunter (Shitī Hantā)* aired 1987-1988, Yomiuri TV. Based on a manga series by Tsukasa Hojo, serialised in Weekly Shōnen Jump from 1985 to 1991. A more detailed synopsis is offered later in this chapter.

not entirely clear (Yin 2009, 18). By constructing a ‘chain of evidence’ based on a sequence of events over time, the case study methodology seeks to be not merely descriptive, but also explanatory and analytical. The popularity of the case study methodology has also been highlighted in related studies within the wider field of film music, with works such as Daniel Goldmark’s *Tunes for 'toons music and the Hollywood cartoon* (2005) and Peter Wegele’s *Max Steiner: composing, Casablanca, and the golden age of film music* (2014) taking a particular genre or era of film music as their focus, looking to identify trends or tropes (and their evolution) across a number of composers. Goldmark’s work in particular is highly relevant in this context — comprising as it does a distinct analysis of music composed specifically for animation in America — laying down a template for how I might conduct a similar study in Japan. A survey of existing literature in this manner forms a core part of the preparatory stages of the case study methodology, providing the groundwork for an understanding of how theory can be used ‘illustratively’. This is in line with Yin’s views that the purpose of the case study methodology is ‘theory development’ (Yin 2009, 35-28), and thus, working from a defined starting point or core theoretical proposition helps not only to focus attention on observable trends in the materials analysed, but also acts as a means for guiding or orientating the case study as a whole (Yin 2009, 130).

By examining Komuro’s career and output in closer detail, as well as the societal backdrop he and his contemporaries were creating music in, I will look to outline what John Fiske describes as ‘Popular Productivity’ (Fiske 1991, 142) — specifically, the idea of production as consumption, in which ‘the products of capitalism became the raw materials, the primary resources, of popular culture’. He envisions a struggle between the nature of these resources (as provided by the financial economy) and the cultural needs of everyday life. In this manner, popular culture is more than simply a consumption of images (or sounds), but a ‘productive process’ — something that invites us to ask not only ‘what’ is being created/consumed, but also ‘how’. It is this specific process that I will seek to locate — within Komuro’s music for anime — the kind of ‘popular text’ that Fiske sees as characterised by their flow into both ‘each other’ and ‘everyday life’. Drawing on the theories of Bourdieu, he states that ‘one of the main distinctive features of popular culture against high culture is its resolute refusal of any distance between the aesthetic and the everyday’ (Fiske 1991, 126). Popular texts such as anime and the music that accompanies it epitomise this space between the aesthetic and the everyday — products of the societal backdrop that created them, but also reflections of it.

In the 1980s, Japan found itself in the grip of a ‘bubble’ economy, a period marked by uncontrolled money supply and loose controls on credit, which led to real estate and stock

prices becoming highly inflated. This wash of money lent itself to an era characterised by young people switched-on to the idea of leisure activities and ‘consumerism as a way of life’ (Manzenreiter & Ben-Ari 2004, 494). Against a backdrop of Bubble Japan, aesthetic *became* the everyday — a kind of lived aspirationalism driven not only by commodities themselves, but the image, the idea, of owning said commodities. As popular texts and commodities in their own right, to what extent can we see music and anime as forces for generating (and reflecting) this new image of Japanese affluence?

Commodities of Culture — A brief background to anime in the 1980s

Accounts of the anime industry in the 1980s are effusive in their highlighting of the dramatic changes it underwent at the time. From the rapid boom in adult-orientated product, to the arrival of commercial videotape in 1983 — which Clements sees as ‘arguably anime’s greatest transformation’ (2013, 155) — the anime industry in the 1980s had essentially ‘come of age’, now both produced and consumed by individuals who had spent the last 20 years growing up on the medium. But this newness was not limited to the anime industry itself — it was there in the appetites of Japan’s populace, too. Condry, for example (2011, 233), sees the booming bubble economy as intimately linked to the creation of a ‘new breed’ (*shinjinrui*) of ‘twenty-something consumers’ living in life’s fast lane, breezing through an endless parade of fancy restaurants, on-trend nightclubs and glamorous brand-name fashion. These ideas of a ‘new breed’ had already been riffed on in 1979’s landmark science-fiction series *Mobile Suit Gundam*, in which ‘newtypes’ were a kind of psychically-endowed human (which explained how teenage children could suddenly pilot the series’ titular giant robots), a literal next-step in the evolution of humanity as a species (Clements 2013, 154) — to all intents and purposes superior to what had come before. These very same Gundam robots — albeit in toy form — would go on to become part of the bubble economy themselves, with over 4.4 million models sold within the space of two years in the early 1980s (Tada 2002, 30).

Clements characterises the 1980s anime industry under two broad trends — the ‘media-mix’ and ‘maturation’. Drawing on Steinberg’s idea of the media mix (Steinberg 2012, 161-169), Clements notes that in regards to anime films at the Japanese box office, the number of sequels or re-edits of TV series into feature length movies boomed from only three in 1977 to twenty in 1986. When spin-offs from manga or live-action shows are also included, the number of truly ‘original’ anime films was as low as one or two per year (Clements 2013, 159). This climate of adaptation and re-packaging of content coincided with maturing

audiences who were old enough and savvy enough to have developed particular tastes in the kind of content they consumed. They knew what genres they liked, what characters they liked, what magazines they wanted to buy — and most crucially, how they wanted to live their lives and what pleasures they wanted to indulge in. On one hand, this was taken to its logical conclusion, anime’s capacity to depict what would have been ‘prohibitively expensive or illegal to stage with real people’ saw it boom as a prime medium for pornographic home-video, with said tapes often being rented on average four-times as often as other titles (Clements 2013, 171). Beyond this extreme, however, grew a periphery of shows that flirted just enough with the titillating thrills of sex and violence to attract this increasingly mature audience, whilst remaining safe enough to see themselves situated within the mainstream. It is exactly this periphery that gave rise to the kinds of show that Tetsuya Komuro’s music would soundtrack.

This background detail is important because it gives us a more fully-realised social context in which to situate the core value-creation system we seek to analyse in the interplay between Japan’s music and animation industries. Clements frames his history of the anime industry through the lens of an Ownership-Access model (building on observations put forward by Klinger [1997, 115-118]) — with the anime ‘object’ flowing through a series of successive nodes:

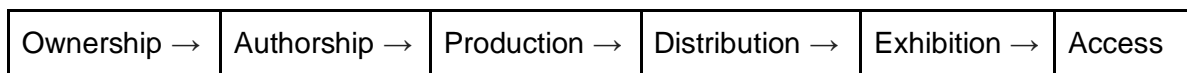


Figure 2: The Ownership-Access Chain (Clements 2013, 6)

This chain begins with rights holders, investors and sponsors — the legal ‘owners’, before being processed via the creative input of authors (writers /directors). What follows is the process of production, distribution and exhibition, transforming the object from mere concept to a tangible asset that can be sold, marketed and promoted before its eventual exhibition via mediums such as cinema or TV. The final stage — Access — involves the viewer, at the precise moment they engage in the act of ‘viewing’. In this model, the emphasis is placed very much on the object’s status as intellectual property, a broadly consistent source entity to be passed through various stages. While Clements does acknowledge the anime object as a ‘commodity’, he interprets the act of ‘accessing’ anime as an ‘event’ more than an act of outright consumption (Clements 2013, 5-8). This approach has the advantage of highlighting crucial instances of value-creation (such as a film debuting at the box office, or a fan buying a copy of it on DVD) but its linearity potentially obscures how many of these processes may

in fact be happening simultaneously, or that the nature or format of the object itself may inform the process it moves through.

To this end, we might also question the nuances between anime (and by extension, any music attached to it) as 'object' and anime as 'product'. An object suggests a certain kind of interactibility linked to the act of viewing (we see an object), but the idea of a 'product' goes further — it is *manufactured, refined*, and most importantly, it is the result of an action or *process*. Its meaning is generated *through* movement. Thomas Lamarre's thinking in *The Anime Ecology* echoes this view, suggesting that animation is 'not an object but a process' (Lamarre 2018, 50). Recent analysis, such as that by Alex Dudok de Wit (2021) places particular emphasis on what exactly this distinction entails, suggesting a fundamental move beyond the 'bias' or 'assumption that live action is the default cinematic form' (2021, 34). On one hand, there are clear logistical processes at play such as the financial merits of utilising animation to more cheaply depict fantastical or historical settings. On the other hand, and perhaps more crucially, there is the simple element of human decision and the impetus for creative staff to rely on the talent and experience at their disposal (2021, 34-35). If a set of creative staff are used to working in the animated medium, and the industry frameworks and audiences exist to support this, then it follows that the creation of animated content will remain a meaningful process. Indeed, if we are to read the relationship between subject (in this case, either producer or consumer) and object (anime) as inseparable, it is precisely because of the human agency involved in the interaction that a sense of generative force or 'value' is called into being. Every instance of human involvement with a piece of animated content, from initial gestation through to viewing, is a potentially 'value-full' moment, combining together to fulfil the 'process' of animation.

Thus, in line with my research question, in order to better analyse the idea of 'value' generated by the use of music within anime it is helpful to look toward a different kind of movement or 'flow' of product, one which specifically maps out the interaction points or roles of human practice as they are brought into contact through various interstices of production and consumption. Fiske's *Understanding Popular Culture* (1991) provides us with a useful model to this effect, tracing the flow of product (i.e. commodities) from producer through to consumer within such a system.

	Financial Economy	Financial Economy	Cultural Economy
	I	II	
Producer	Production Studio ↓	Program ↓	Audience ↓
Commodity	Program ↓	Audience ↓	Meanings/Pleasure ↓
Consumer	Distributor	Advertiser	Itself

Figure 3: The Commodities of Culture (Fiske 1991, 26)

Fiske's crucial distinction is that this flow actually occurs within two linked, but 'semi-autonomous' systems (with the financial dimension further divided into two sub-sections). In his example of television programs, at the moment a show is 'produced' (i.e. commodified), it shifts to become a producer in its own right, in turn generating its own commodity — an audience — which contains its own inherent value. In this sense, we have a clear identification of the functional or monetary side of the equation. But going beyond this, there is the simultaneous dimension of a cultural economy, where, as Fiske states: 'the circulation is not one of money, but of meanings and pleasures' (1991, 27). In this manner, the line between producers and consumers becomes blurred — indeed, if we are to follow Fiske's model — it is the audiences themselves (consumers within the financial economy) who now become the *producers* of meaning. Here, we find a link between Fiske's model and existing discourses of audience or fan theory, in particular, a repositioning of audiences away from their traditional position at 'the bottom of the pile' (Hills 2003, 29) and into a position where they are best placed to become producers in their own right, precisely because they 'are part of a community and understand its values and shared fantasies' (Jenkins 2018, 204). Laurie Cubbison's work on anime fandom is especially useful here in its identification of a 'sense of authenticity' and its valuation of 'knowledge' amongst fandom as key criteria within this dynamic of a more *meaningful* viewing experience (2005, 51). Cubbison presents this kind of engaged fandom in tandem with the DVD format, which we can read here as a stand-in for the monetised consumer impulse to buy, to own a piece of media content. For the fans in Cubbison's study, it is invariably in the friction between these two spheres — money and meaning — that conflict can arise, for example, in the quality and authenticity of the subtitling on a new anime DVD release (2005, 55).

It is in the delineation of these two distinct, circulatory systems of value-creation (money/meaning) that we find ourselves returning to the crux of my research question and

what 'added value' — so to speak — can we see the addition of music making to anime product? For this, we must turn to what Fiske sees as the two core functions of commodities: the material and the cultural. The material function is, in essence, the identifiable real-world use-value of the commodity. In the instance of anime music, this could encompass a number of dimensions: To advertise the show it accompanies, to provide background music for it, to sell CDs, to provide pleasure to the listener, to give them something to dance or sing along to. The cultural function is more nuanced — as Fiske puts it, '[it] is concerned with meanings and values: All commodities can be used by the consumer to construct meanings of self, of social identity and social relations' (1991, 11). Here, we might consider how consuming anime music might make the consumer *feel* — a sense of inclusiveness, of 'coolness', of affluence, and so on — a whole gamut of social identifiers that signify their position (and who they, themselves, are) within a wider society, because of the *kind* of music they choose to consume. By building on Fiske's model detailing the flow of commodities, my methodology will look to situate the value and 'meaning' generated by anime music during Japan's economic bubble — identifying within the wider societal backdrop concrete instances of both Fiske's 'financial economy' and 'cultural economy'. With the frameworks of Japan's distinct media-mix ecosystem firmly established in the previous chapter, we can now turn to exploring how the anime industry in the 1980s would serve as a distinctly playful field for the creation of aspirational imagery — informed invariably by live-action aesthetics from overseas, but tailored to Japanese audiences through the distinct plasticity, multiplicity and freedom anime (and its music) allows as a medium.

As the next section will aim to highlight, the career of Tetsuya Komuro and the music he was creating for anime in the 1980s is an ideal lens through which to examine many of the above questions about the production, consumption and value of anime music as pop-cultural 'commodity'. For Fiske, the link between a society and its popular product are self-evident: 'We live in an industrial society, so of course our popular culture is an industrialised culture, as are all our resources,' (1991, 27). In line with this, the suggestion is that a systemised flow of commodities from producer to consumer will naturally give rise to a systemised 'kind' of commodity, one in which its very purpose and existence as a piece of *popular* culture is reflective of the societal conditions it emerged from.

Tetsuya Komuro — The soundtrack to success

Today, Tetsuya Komuro is best known for his work as a songwriter and producer for hit Japanese pop acts such as Namie Amuro.³³ In Japan's Oricon singles chart of April 15th 1996 he monopolised the Top 5 positions, and — by 2008 — records produced by him had sold more than 170 million copies. His career has even encompassed international collaborations, such as with French electronica musician Jean Michel Jarre³⁴ on 1998 FIFA World Cup theme song *Together Now* and production work for Dannii Minogue³⁵ - featuring club track *Rescue Me* as part of his dance group EuroGroove in 1995³⁶. For all his status as a kind of 'musical tycoon' (Craig 2015, 5) however, it is worth noting that Komuro's earliest successes in the 1980s were as part of the anime industry, producing both soundtracks and theme songs for a number of properties that would go on to become some of the most fondly remembered titles of the decade.



Figure 4: Tetsuya Komuro on the cover of his 2013 solo album *Digitalian is Eating Breakfast 3*.

³³ Namie Amuro (1977-) made her debut as a solo artist in 1995 with the Komuro-produced track *Body Feels Exit* before going on to become one of Japan's biggest selling pop artists of all time. She is frequently compared to artists such as Janet Jackson and Madonna.

³⁴ Jean-Michel Jarre (1948-). French composer/performer, best known for his 1978 album *Oxygène* and performing to record-breaking audiences in a series of outdoor events. Has sold over 80 million albums around the world.

³⁵ Dannii Minogue (1971-). Australian singer, and sister of Kylie Minogue. The 1990s saw her release a string of dance-pop records, while in the 2000s, she would become better known to many audiences through her role as a judge on TV talent shows such as Australia's *Got Talent* and *The X Factor UK*.

³⁶ 1995 would prove to be particularly successful for Komuro's EuroGroove project, with three of their tracks entering the UK Top 40 singles chart during this year, most notably the track *Move Your Body*.

Komuro's musical activities were prodigious even during his childhood. From the age of 3 to 12 he would study violin under a tutor from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, before largely self-teaching himself piano from the fifth grade of school onward. His classmates would quickly notice his skill, and he would often complete their composition homework on behalf of them (Kōyama 1997, 63-64). As Komuro grew older, his tastes would broaden beyond classical music to encompass many rock groups such as Pink Floyd, Yes and Deep Purple as well as disco acts such as Donna Summer and Earth, Wind & Fire. Komuro began his career as a professional musician whilst attending Waseda University's School of Social Sciences, and his knowledge of Western pop and rock would provide a particularly striking sonic foundation for the kind of music he would begin to produce throughout the 1980s.³⁷

Komuro's first solo compositional work was the soundtrack for the feature-length film *Vampire Hunter D* (1985), released on Epic/Sony Records. A fittingly dark, atmospheric collection, the record's sombre, melancholy soundscapes recall the background music for fantasy video-games from the same era. The musical palette, much like the soundtracks for contemporary Hollywood hits of the era such as *Blade Runner* (1982), is purely electronic in nature. In this manner it effectively conjures up an aura of decaying, baroque splendour — an ample match to the flowing, effeminate character designs created for the anime by Yoshitaka Amano (best known for his illustrations for the video-game series *Final Fantasy*³⁸). The pulsing, overbearingly grim opener *Mamonotachi No Yoru (Night of Demons)* and *Kyuketsuki Rii Hakushaku — Shinu (The Vampire, Earl Lee — Death)* drip with reverb heavy drum-machine rhythms and ear-piercing stabs of faux electric guitar, while tracks like *Yakusoku (Promise)* play out as heart-wrenching, emotionally haunted piano-ballads — the synthesized quality of the instruments (the electronic nature of the string section is particular noticeable) only adding to their eeriness. The *Vampire Hunter D* soundtrack plays out as an overture to gothic, dystopian decadence as seen from the heart of the 1980s, the blend of wistful, overtly synthesised melodies also inevitably bringing to mind Vangelis' iconic soundtrack for 1982's *Blade Runner*.³⁹

³⁷ Further biographical information on Komuro is available on his website: <http://www.komuro.com/>

³⁸ Famed Japanese role-playing videogame franchise that has released 15 main instalments since 1987, as well as a number of spin-offs and remakes. The series as a whole has sold over 159 million software units worldwide.

³⁹ *Blade Runner* (1982). Iconic science-fiction film directed by Ridley Scott and starring Harrison Ford. The score by Greek composer Vangelis, which utilises many electronic components, was nominated for a BAFTA and a Golden Globe.

Looking beyond the basic sonic palette and aesthetic backdrop created by the soundtrack, it is clear that Komuro also keenly understood the importance of melody within the work, and its capacity to create memorable ‘hooks’ akin to pop music. This is best evidenced in how, across the twelve tracks of the commercially released soundtrack, a number of core groupings or ‘themes’ are introduced and then repeated in various incarnations.

A1: Mamonotachi No Yoru	Night of Demons
A2: D Fukkatsu	D — Resurrection
A3: D Zetsumei	D — Death
A4: Kyuketsuki Rii Hakushaku (Tojo)	The Vampire, Earl Lee (Entrance)
A5: Kizoku No Konrei	Marriage of Nobles
A6: Kyuketsuki Rii Hakushaku (Shi)	The Vampire, Earl Lee (Death)
B1: D No Tema (Tojo)	D’s Theme (Entrance)
B2: Yakusoku (Part I)	Promise (Part I)
B3: D No Tema (Dorisu No Ai)	D’s Theme (Doris’s Love)
B4: Dorisu Dakkai	Rescuing Doris
B5: D No Tema (Wakare)	D’s Theme (Parting)
B6: Yakusoku (Part II)	Promise (Part II)

Figure 5: The track list for the 12” vinyl release of the *Vampire Hunter D* soundtrack (Discogs)⁴⁰

Of particular note is *D No Tema (D’s Theme)* — encompassing three different versions of the same melody played with different instrumentations and at varying paces. Subtitled ‘Entrance’, ‘Doris’s Love’ and ‘Parting’ respectively, this trio not only signals a clear narrative progression through the course of the film’s story, but also allows for a range of emotions to be attributed to a recurring musical ‘idea’. This narrative element of the musical accompaniment ties in to the notion of the soundtrack as a kind of ‘applied’ music, a concept inherent in its supportive role to the film itself as well as the idea that the music supplies a thematic ‘bridging’ between the audio and visual components. It is this concept that is commonly referenced as the ‘leitmotif’ in particular relation to its capacity to link the appearances of a person, place or thing together with a recurring musical phrase (Tonks 2001) (Kennedy & Bourne 2004). This recurrence and resultant familiarity — as shown across the twelve tracks above — leads us closer to a kind of systemised understanding of how film music ‘works’. In particular, how the audience’s emotional responses can be elicited based on an understanding that a certain recognisable musical cue (in this instance, *D’s Theme*) will accompany a certain kind of scene, namely, one of core narrative importance. In

⁴⁰ <https://www.discogs.com/Tetsuya-Komuro-Vampire-Hunter-D-%E5%90%B8%E8%A1%80%E9%AC%BC%E3%83%8F%E3%83%B3%E3%82%BF%E3%83%BC/release/7453492> (accessed 6 March 2019)

this sense, the recurring melody present in all three versions of the track acts as a kind of auditory ‘signpost’, flagging up to the viewer/listener that something crucial is happening on-screen. Thus, the ‘Entrance’ version of *D’s Theme* is uplifting and optimistic, the ‘Doris’s Love’ version is romantic, tender, and swells to a rousing crescendo, while the ‘Parting’ version is elegiac. The clarity and melodiousness of these leitmotifs not only highlight deft usage of classical film music tropes as processed through electronic instrumentation, but also hold hints of the kind of pop fare Komuro would go on to create as a producer and pop musician. In this respect, it is important to note that his role within *Vampire Hunter D* was not merely limited to creating the background music for the film’s soundtrack, it also encompassed his band TM Network — which he had formed a year earlier with Takashi Utsunomiya and Naoto Kine — providing the closing credits theme *Your Song*, highlighting how even at this early stage, Komuro was operating simultaneously as both composer and performer.

Two years later, TM Network would get their big break, when their single *Get Wild* was released as the first ending theme for the anime *City Hunter* (1987). Blending both Japanese and English language lyrics, *Get Wild* is emblematic of the increasingly ‘adult’ direction anime themes had been taking across the decade. Whereas the kinds of tracks attached to shows in the early 1980s had often favoured a ‘brighter’, more rock-orientated sound, *Get Wild* was sleek, sensual and — most importantly — sounded like something at the cutting edge of current club trends. At its heart, an almost naively simple (and thus eminently hummable) synthesizer sequence that — after its initial establishment in the song’s opening moments — returns to act as the core melodic backing for the song’s chorus. The effect is somewhere halfway between Duran Duran’s *The Wild Boys* and Culture Beat’s *Mr Vain*, and for all the song’s adoration of icy electronics, it pulls off the deft balancing act of pairing the energy and passion of a football-terrace singalong anthem to a relentless club-ready beat.

Both critics and the public were quick to pick up on TM Network’s ear-catching sound, tagging them as the ‘group that plays pop music with futuristic sounds making full use of synthesizers’⁴¹ with their sound frequently compared to ‘Eurobeat’, the high-energy dance music genre that was rapidly gaining in popularity in the clubs across Europe at the time. Komuro had spent time in the UK and been ‘profoundly inspired’ by the rave culture he had experienced there — the influence plain to hear in the music he would go on to create in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Brasor 2008). In descriptions of their sonic aesthetic, TM Network’s identity is fully encompassed by their electric, ‘synthesised’ nature — in essence,

⁴¹ <http://www.pia.co.jp/column/music/tm-network.html> (accessed 6 March 2019)

they are as much a product of the 1980s as their keyboards and synthesisers. Even the band's name — which is reportedly an abbreviation of 'Time Machine Network' — lends itself to a feel of mechanised interconnectedness. Komuro would further play with the idea of knowingly mechanical self-branding in the 1990s and 2000s with his subsequent project 'TRF', also known as Tetsuya Komuro Rave Factory, who contributed theme songs to the anime series *Black Jack 21*⁴² and *Wangan Midnight*.⁴³ Across his varying incarnations, Komuro's music would posit a potent cocktail of high technology and 'European'-influenced sound — something resolutely 'beyond' the hum-drum everyday, a promise of barely controllable excitement in line with TM Network's original call to *Get Wild*.

To better situate the aspirational feel of *Get Wild*, it is helpful to provide a brief introduction to *City Hunter* itself. The show tells the story of Ryo Saeba, a professional 'sweeper' (private detective-cum-bodyguard-for-hire) who works Tokyo's Shinjuku district alongside his partner Hideyuki Makimura. Their 'City Hunter' business can be contracted for work by writing the letters 'XYZ' on a blackboard at Shinjuku station. However, when Hideyuki is suddenly killed, Ryo finds himself saddled with Hideyuki's sister Kaori, a tomboy who becomes his new partner, one of many attractive females that find themselves entangled — romantically or otherwise — with Ryo. Following the initial 1987 series (with the *Anime Encyclopedia* specifically noting how closing theme *Get Wild* became a hit 'in its own right') (Clements & McCarthy 2015, 137-138), three subsequent seasons followed, alongside a number of theatrical features, one-off TV specials and even — in 1993 — a live-action adaptation starring Jackie Chan (cashing in on the show's global popularity).

Contained within this premise lay two core thrills that would become the driving factors behind the show's popularity, violence and sensuality. With an empowered male lead who is shown to possess notable skill with his weapon (a Colt Python .357 Magnum) and a revolving cast of attractive women for him to act lecherously toward, *City Hunter* essentially became a kind of tick-box exercise in satisfying a particular kind of masculinity, one that mirrored similar trends in American media franchises such as *Die Hard* (original movie trilogy 1988-1995, followed by further instalments in 2007 and 2013) and — as we will examine in more detail later — the TV series *Miami Vice* (1984-1990). This aesthetic would go hand in

⁴² *Black Jack 21* (*Burakku Jakku 21*) aired 2006, Yomiuri TV. A spinoff adaptation of the classic Osamu Tezuka manga that originally ran in Weekly Shōnen Champion magazine between 1973-1983, the story centres around the title character Black Jack aka Kurō Hazama, an unlicensed doctor operating as a kind of medical mercenary.

⁴³ *Wangan Midnight* (*Wangan Middonaito*) aired 2007-2008, Animax. Adapted from an adult-orientated manga originally running from 1990-2008 in first Big Comic Spirits and then Weekly Young Magazine, the story centres around street racers competing against each other on Tokyo's bay-side Shuto Expressway.

hand with anime's increasing lean toward more mature audiences in the 1980s (MacWilliams 2014, 54). This friction between pain and pleasure would manifest itself directly in the lyrics of *Get Wild*:

<p><i>It's your pain or my pain or somebody's pain</i> <i>Dareka no tame ni ikirarerunara</i> <i>It's your dream or my dream or somebody's dream</i> <i>Nani mo kowakuwanai</i></p>	<p><i>It's your pain or my pain or somebody's pain</i> <i>If you can live for someone</i> <i>It's your dream or my dream or somebody's dream</i> <i>You won't be afraid of anything</i></p>
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Figure 6: A selection of lyrics from TM Network's *Get Wild*

TM Network would follow up on the success of *Get Wild* the subsequent year, when their song *Beyond The Time* was used as the ending theme for the film *Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counterattack*.⁴⁴ As the cinematic 'event' movie of the year and a high-budget big-screen outing for one of the biggest anime franchises of the decade, this marked a high point for the band. *Beyond The Time* was a world away from the light-hearted, disco-esque beats of the original *Mobile Suit Gundam* theme. In the decade between 1979 and 1988, Gundam (and its audience) had grown up, and in a way, so had Komuro — while *Get Wild* felt like a track fundamentally designed to be enjoyed as part of a hedonistic youth culture, *Beyond The Time* felt markedly more adult in tone, a 'prestige' song befitting the status of its accompanying film. While Komuro naturally retains the synth-heavy orchestration of *Get Wild*, it is matched to a more measured, sprawling pace which includes an immense minute-long instrumental outro complete with sax solo. With its strong rhythmic bassline, epic feel and high profile theme-song status, the track brings to mind a-ha's Bond opener *The Living Daylights* from a few years prior (1987). Lyrically, *Beyond The Time* builds slowly toward a chant-like chorus, peppered with aspirational affirmations in English:

<p><i>You can change your destiny</i> <i>toki no mukou</i> <i>You can change your future</i> <i>yami no mukou</i> <i>We can share the happiness</i></p>	<p><i>You can change your destiny</i> <i>Beyond the time</i> <i>You can change your future</i> <i>Beyond the darkness</i> <i>We can share the happiness</i></p>
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⁴⁴ *Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counterattack* (*Kidō Senshi Gandamu: Gyakushū no Shā*), released 1988. Acting as a cinematic culmination to the story originally begun in 1979's original TV outing of *Mobile Suit Gundam*, the film grossed ¥1.16 billion at the box office and was notable for an early use of CGI alongside traditional two-dimensional animation techniques.

<p><i>sagashite yuku</i> <i>yurushi aeru sono hi o</i></p>	<p><i>That we've been looking for</i> <i>That day when I'll accept</i> <i>forgiveness</i></p>
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Figure 7: A selection of lyrics from TM Network's *Beyond The Time*

In presenting a segment of the lyrics to both *Get Wild* and *Beyond The Time*, it is worth unpacking some of the complexities present in the mixing of English and Japanese within the songs — a trend that has characterised Komuro's music throughout his career. In his account of the Japanese music industry, Martin provides a useful explanation of the way language can be utilised with specific agency to convey meaning not only on the literal level, but also the conceptual:

Language doesn't just embody meanings of individual words, it also embodies thought processes, and these aren't always mutually and directly transferable. Language can be seen as a set of rails on which thoughts can travel, and different sets of rails carry thoughts to slightly different places.

(Martin 2016, 171)

In essence, it is not just the literal meaning of the line 'It's your dream or my dream or somebody's dream' in *Get Wild* that carries a certain thought process for the listener, but more importantly, hearing this line sung in English (as opposed to Japanese) creates a *different* kind of thought process. Andrew Moody touches on similar themes, commenting on the use of English within Japanese popular culture and Japanese pop music (J-Pop) in regard to the role language-use can play in forming expressions of identity, and more specifically, that 'individual expressions may function as a vehicle of change in identity, and an expression of the community's desires rather than practice' (Moody 2006, 220). Much like Martin's comments on the distinction between individual meaning and the embodiment of a thought process, if we are to read the use of English within Komuro's songs as embodied *desire*, we encounter a new kind of ambiguous playfulness, in which these theme songs act as a playground in which the specific act of utilising English embodies a freedom not possible in singing the same words in Japanese. This chimes with Fiske's observation of title sequences and music videos as not only commodities of 'explicitly commercial purpose', but also moments of 'licensed play' and a 'carnavalesque, liberated pleasure' (Fiske 1989, 205). In this manner, we can envision TM Network's title music sequences for *City Hunter* and *Mobile Suit Gundam* as precisely these kinds of 'licensed play' areas, spaces designed not

only for the immediate auditory pleasure of the music itself, but somewhere to locate various kinds of aesthetic desire.

Writing in the late 1980s, Fiske's study revels in many of the most recognisable commercial signifiers of the decade — Madonna's music videos, Coke commercials and the TV show *Miami Vice*. Fiske sees the style of *Miami Vice* as 'borrowed' from music videos and commercials, utilising hit pop songs to soundtrack (in much the same way *City Hunter* did within the medium of anime) masculinised images of 'cruising the urban landscape' (Fiske 1989, 208). His subsequent close analysis of the show and the lyrics of one of the songs that appears in it centres on the idea of pleasure, as mediated through the imagery of its signifiers (e.g. fast cars, porn, drugs etc.). In this context, can we perhaps read the desire embodied in Komuro's English lyrics as a similar kind of pleasure, a signifier of something above and beyond what the lyrics literally translate as? Fiske offers hints at unravelling this separation between signifier and meaning in his explanation of a specific kind of 'commodified pleasure'. Here, he cites examples of people window-shopping in malls as a way of consuming not commodities, but the image and space said commodities occupy (Fiske 1989, 214). For these people, consuming the *image* of the commodity, the *desire* to own it, is enough — to be in the same shared, physical space as the commodity is to be part of its world, part of its aesthetic excitement. In much the same way, for Japanese audiences hearing the English lyrics in Komuro's music, the meaning is supplementary to the *idea* of Englishness and the liberated pleasure entailed in using it. Thus, when *City Hunter's* sleek, urban masculinity suggests a degree of intertextuality with American media like *Miami Vice*, we can read this synchronicity as part of a wider globalised construction of a desirable aesthetic — one that sits not behind the window of a shopping mall, but behind the TV screen. Here, *City Hunter* becomes a kind of America-by-proxy, suffused with Western media-values and aesthetic, but — just like Komuro's music — refashioned specifically for a Japanese market.

Participatory product — Karaoke and 'Komuro-kei'

In the previous section, we have highlighted how the music of Tetsuya Komuro's TM Network project combined sound and lyrics to craft an alluring, aspirational soundscape to match both the anime they accompanied, and the wider societal backdrop of 1980s Japan. But in seeking to better establish the 'use-value' of their music and its status as commercial product, it is worth considering not only how Komuro's music sold a style or image to listeners, but also took on the status of 'participatory product' and engendered a far more active kind of consumption.

It is exactly this more active kind of consumption that Hiroshi Ogawa details in his account *The Effects of Karaoke on Music In Japan*. Tracing the evolution of karaoke from a loosely defined 'early scene', Ogawa acknowledges that while forms of participatory singing had always existed within social spaces such as bars and dinner parties, it was the advent of designated karaoke equipment in the 1970s (including an echo effect that would make singers' voices sound more 'professional') and then the introduction of small enclosed spaces (the 'karaoke box' or 'booth') in the late 1980s that really began to engender an observable shift within the kind of music being created in Japan (Ogawa 1998, 46-47). One noticeable effect of this was the rapid rise in the number of pop singles selling over a million copies. As he notes, at the start of the 1980s only a few singles to date had ever recorded sales of over a million copies. By 1991, however, ten or more million-selling singles each year was a regular occurrence. Behind this, the drive of the karaoke boom — suddenly, a song wasn't merely about being 'good to listen to' but 'good to sing' as well (Ogawa 1998, 49-50).

Ogawa singles out Tetsuya Komuro as emblematic of this approach, as record labels hurried to include instrumental 'karaoke' versions of songs on CD singles so that fans could practice at home. Komuro realised that young people would head to karaoke booths after they'd spent the night drinking and dancing at discos, and so concentrated his efforts on exactly the kind of songs that would be sung at karaoke. This kind of reflexive production would be matched by an equal 'active consumption' on the part of the karaoke singers themselves, with Ogawa noting 'Users often check what songs will be used as theme songs or image songs⁴⁵ in advance in order to practice singing these particular songs' (Ogawa 1998, 51). This process of 'selection' is particularly important, because by this point, chart hits were invariably theme songs for TV dramas, or image songs for TV commercials. As part of this media mix of 'tie-up' music, the core value component becomes 'songs known in common among friends' (Ogawa 1998, 50-51), and thus, the very commonality or popularity of the music becomes its core defining attribute.

An interesting study from Kyoko Koizumi published in 2002 also touches on this same issue of commonality, in particular relation to Japanese High School pupils and their discourses about music in relation to leisure sites (such as karaoke booths). In her study, one of the participants dismisses 'Komuro-kei' as a 'cliched' kind of music (2002, 116). This statement

⁴⁵ An 'image song', also sometimes called a 'character song', is another form of tie-in song associated with the anime/gaming industry and is typically sung 'in character' by the voice actor as a means of helping build a sense of personality for the role they portray in the associated media property.

is telling in two respects. Firstly, it identifies Komuro's music as a kind of '-kei', a term which in Japanese typically identifies a 'special genre' of popular music (2002, 123). In this sense, Komuro's music becomes more than simply a product in its own right, but indicative of a larger 'style' or 'scene'. Secondly, it highlights the participant's knowledge of Komuro's music as working within a system of musical tropes or archetypes, something mechanised, as opposed to the 'natural music' of the guitar bands the participant proclaims to enjoy instead.

Koizumi's study highlights Komuro's output as 'common music' — suitable for singing at karaoke — and almost as a kind of 'miscellaneous knowledge' required by young people to exist in contemporary society. Here, Komuro's music has gone beyond 'literal' soundtrack, becoming a 'figurative' soundtrack to the lives of young Japanese socialising with their peers, the experience of interacting with it inevitably informed by the fact that, yes, everyone else really is listening to his music, so why not you? This homogenising, centralising process — the 'effect' that Ogawa observes in the impact of karaoke on the kind of music Japan was creating at the time — plugs back in to the financial needs of the popular product (and its supporting industry) to work at the peak of its powers. As Fiske observes, 'The more consumers any one product can reach, and the more any one product can be reproduced by the existing processes within the cultural factory, the greater the economic return on it. It must therefore attempt to appeal to what people have in common, to deny social differences' (1991, 28). In this sense, the function of karaoke is ideal. Just as Komuro identified the allure in providing music for consumers moving from discos to karaoke, eager for 'more', the karaoke industry itself essentially allows a kind of 'double-dipping' for music companies looking to profit twice from consumers. Not only will they buy the original record, but they will then pay again to sing along to it in a karaoke booth, thus boosting the economic return from the same original product.

These notions of commonality and Ogawa's comments regarding the transformation of music from being simply 'good to listen to' toward 'good to sing' suggest that perhaps, it is the 'pop-ness' itself of Komuro's music that enables it with a specific functionality and value. In this sense, we can read Komuro's music — both as soundtrack and popular song — as very much adhering to the five core, 'basic aspects' of popular music — as opposed to classical — laid out by Altman, namely: linguistic dependence, predictability, singability, rememberability and active physical involvement (Altman 2001, 24-25). Altman's comments are particularly relevant to my argument because, in relation to their application within film soundtracks, he holds pop music up in specific contrast to classical music, writing that popular music possesses certain 'capacities' that allow it to 'perform certain operations better' than classical music, one of which being its 'separate marketability' (Altman 2001,

26). While Altman's 'basic aspects' of popular music address the value and meaning inherent in the cultural economy of popular song, it is his allusion to 'operations' that returns us to the financial side of the equation, and the clear for-profit drive in the intertwining of film and recording industries. Within this intertwining, music functions as auditory commodity — short, inexpensive and easily distributed, linked to the film, but also apart from it. Standing first and foremost in achieving these means: The potentially lucrative 'theme song' (Altman 2001, 28). With Altman's comments in mind, we can observe clear value in the way TM Network's *City Hunter* theme *Get Wild* has gone on to achieve an impressive afterlife since its original 1987 release, becoming emblematic for a generation of anime fans who came of age in the late 1980s. In a 2016 magazine poll of over 6000 participants, *Get Wild* came in 8th in a ranking of all time favourite anime songs (Ellard 2016). Likewise, when a new cinematic version of *City Hunter* was announced in late 2018, it was — of course — *Get Wild* that soundtracked the trailer.⁴⁶

It is within this evident nostalgia for an era, its aesthetic and its sound that we can read a further kind of distribution that exists beyond the overt kind inherent in a song being wheeled out again for a re-packaged, re-promoted version of a 'classic' show. As we outlined earlier with Fiske's model of the Cultural Economy (Figure 2), the audience can also become their own producers of meaning/pleasure. Here, they essentially recycle their own past experiences — in which the distributed 'product' is their own memories — the infinite shelf-life of a song they will never get tired of reminiscing about. It is this kind of internal value-creation that we can observe in Ian F. Martin's effusively dismissive comments on Komuro and TM Network, where he states that 'The group had started out as a synth-based new wave band before evolving into fairly appalling stadium rockers whose enduring popularity rested largely on the misty-eyed nostalgia of thirtysomethings and the fact they did the theme song to the anime *City Hunter*' before going on to note '[Komuro's] style of tinny dance-pop remains one of the most characteristic and recognisable sounds of the 90s' (Martin 2016, 77-78). For Martin, the 'value' of Komuro's music exists only in the nostalgia its fans attribute it, and its recognisability as a kind of soundtrack for an era. Ultimately however, what remains key is its enduring nature (and within that, the possibility for further distribution and economic return). The potential for this kind of cultural 'afterlife' has been similarly observed in Matt Hills's account of the 'persistent remapping' of Elvis Presley as icon, and the corresponding shift in the creation of meaning from producers to audiences following the star's death. Hills argues that it was precisely the persistence, reproduction and reiteration of Elvis's image 'across generations and across social-historical contexts' that

⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRFmaZa1OY> (accessed 6 March 2019)

helped establish him as a cult icon (140-143). This 'reusability' echoes similar ideas by Jenkins, Ford and Green (2018, 198) who see the spread of media content as something triggered by a desire to engage meaningfully with it. In particular relevance to music, they note: 'We may share songs from our favorite band as a way to define ourselves, to communicate something about who we are and what we like to our friends' (2018, 199). Through karaoke, and the participatory engagement with music it allows, Komuro's music has been given a similar kind of extended afterlife. Just as *Get Wild* at the time encapsulated the aesthetic of the 1980s, the song has now arguably become a signifier for the decade itself — its aesthetic shifting from that of an aspirational present to a nostalgic past. The core distinction remains the same though, a tantalising auditory image of something just out of reach — for fans of the song in the 1980s, now grown old, it offers memories of what once was. For those too young to experience it the first time around, the song hints at opportunities missed. In this sense, one could argue that anime is the perfect medium to lend itself to the re-packaging of material — while live action actors might age or die, animated characters remain eternally youthful, and like the music accompanying them, can therefore shift fluidly between the aforementioned aspirational present and nostalgic past..

Returning to Clements' comments on the anime industry in the 1980s, he notes that it was only at this point that anime audiences 'gained the means to retain their connoisseurship, to discuss it and pass it on, creating a discourse and an archive that could articulate 'anime' as an object of enquiry, appreciation and consumption' (Clements 2013, 175). While Martin's comments above might envision, rather disparagingly, that nostalgia has a capacity to create or amplify 'value' where none is originally present in the source media, I would instead argue that the key to the value in fact lies within the process of nostalgia itself. By this, I think Clements' emphasis on the retention aspect of connoisseurship is central to its interweaving with nostalgia; nostalgia is not a binary relationship between an individual and the past, but is instead something fed through numerous (and constant) inputs and outputs. It is precisely this mindset, comments Clements, that would see anime become a fully blown 'contents industry' in the 1990s as record labels, gaming companies, and other investors sought to become part of production committees — exercising an even tighter control on the kind of product generated (Clements 2013, 175). This idea of 'tight control' is echoed by Fiske, who states: 'Advertising tries to control the cultural meanings of commodities by mapping them as tightly as possible onto the workings of the financial economy' (1991, 29). Here, more than ever, we can read cultural value as financial value — the two locked in a symbiotic relationship in which both the cultural and the financial, as well as production and consumption, become part of a closed loop.

In this sense, we can read a history of anime and its associated paraphernalia in the 1980s as a shift toward the anime industry as *industry*. Tetsuya Komuro's music for the *Vampire Hunter D*, *City Hunter* and *Mobile Suit Gundam* franchises is particularly useful in illustrating this because all three of these anime are emblematic of the media-mix philosophy that suffused the industry during this period. Whether as manga, novel, vinyl record, CD, karaoke session, toy model or anime home-video, the history of these products remains inherently intermingled — part of a web of connected parts all designed to keep their associated brand identity firmly in the consumer's awareness. This 'media-mix' can be envisioned as such not only because it contains a *mix* of different forms of media, but also precisely because it is *mixed* — with each part coalescing and snowballing around another. Bolter and Grusin suggest something similar in their description of the bombardment-like effect present in the multiplication of potential media channels. Music videos are singled out as a prime example of 'remediation', in which their elaborate editing and multiple media inputs become a fundamental part of their 'spontaneous style'. Together, these 'hypermediated' experiences in themselves create an even greater sense of newness, 'immediacy' and desire for the consumer (Bolter & Grusin 1996, 314).

To best illustrate this point further: Komuro's music for *Vampire Hunter D* exists because the film required a soundtrack, and the film — in turn — exists, because of the novel on which it was based. At each stage, a new medium, a new commodity — but also, and perhaps most crucially, a spreading of the cultural 'space' said franchise occupies. Envisioning this gravity-like pull of interconnected parts, we can return to Fiske's ideas regarding this mesh of commodities as an inherent part of the era's financial backdrop: 'Late capitalism,' he writes, 'with its market economy, is characterised by commodities — it is awash with them, it would be impossible to escape them, even if one wanted to' (1991, 11). Komuro's music, placed in orbit around its accompanying anime — and alongside other components of the media mix — becomes part of this wash of commodification. We have sought to offer here a flavour of the way music can become a participatory soundtrack through mediums like karaoke, and the value this kind of consumption engenders for both the creators and consumers of said music. Komuro's music is more than just an advert or tie-up for the show it accompanies, it becomes an advert for a particular cultural time and space — engendering a desire to feel included in the zone of meaning/pleasure-creation referenced in Fiske's idea of the cultural economy. In ensuring this, its commonality — its 'pop-ness' — becomes its defining characteristic — a consistent meaning conveyed to a consistent audience. Within this notion of homogeneity, Komuro becomes more than a composer, more than a musician — he becomes 'Komuro-kei', he becomes a 'brand'.

‘Multihyphenate’ identities — Defining the ‘Japanese composer’

What can Komuro’s dual identity — as both ‘anime composer’ and hit pop producer — tell us about his status as a creator, and the appetite for his particular ‘brand’ of music in Japan? Komuro’s eventual rise from a creator of domestic Japanese product in the 1980s, to someone operating within the global music market in the 1990s, also presents interesting questions about how we might juxtapose his international status and influences with his identity as a Japanese creator, and to what degree the ‘pop-ness’ of his music eclipses its status as a ‘Japanese’ cultural product. These kinds of frictions form part of an ongoing dialogue regarding contemporary Japanese music, with De Ferranti commenting that ‘little of extant scholarship gives sustained attention to the theme of Japanese popular music as Japanese music,’ before going on to note that ‘[Japanese] musicians have often articulated the urgency of their struggle to reconcile Japanese cultural identity with the Euro-American roots of jazz, rock and other genres’ (De Ferranti 2002, 199). We have observed already how much of the excitement and newness attributed to Komuro’s music was due to the ‘European’ nature of his synth-driven dance-pop style, and yet Hugh De Ferranti cites Komuro as a notable contemporary example of the use of ‘Asian scales’ within contemporary Japanese pop music (De Ferranti 2002, 201). Does an ‘Asian scale’ somehow become un-Japanised when played through a synthesiser instead of a traditional Japanese instrument? Just as we observed above regarding the degree of intertextuality between Japan and the West in the visual aesthetic allure of shows like *City Hunter* and *Miami Vice*, can a similar kind of process be observed within the sonic aesthetic of Komuro’s music?

Discussions of this nature call into question not only the idea of an identifiable national identity within his music (an auditory Japaneseness), but also his hybrid roles as both producer and composer. Komuro is particularly indicative of this, transitioning the dance-music record label Avex⁴⁷ — through which he released many of his productions — from small independent outfit to major-league player, in essence replicating the trajectory of his own career path. In this manner, Komuro shifted in status from an individual creator fulfilling a singular role (soundtrack or theme song production) as part of a larger media mix, to an organisational figure with specified agency in developing his own ‘brand name’ further. De Ferranti sees this flow of creative talent as linked closely to the role of ‘individual producer-composers’ as having particular agency in this ‘fluidity of labour exchange’ between the

⁴⁷ Avex was originally established as a Tokyo-based CD retailer in the late 1980s before opening a recording studio and launching the label imprint Avex Trax in 1990. Komuro’s TRF project would become the first act signed to the label and Komuro himself would be instrumental in helping build the imprint to its status as a genuine contender alongside Japan’s larger major labels.

various spheres of 'mainstream and independent pop music scenes' (2002, 204). As an individual, a producer-composer like Komuro has designated agency, an ability to transition between various production 'spaces'. Yet, as 'brand name' he also brings with him — for better or worse — the accumulation of his previous identities. As De Ferranti notes, commenting on the organisation, presentation, conceptualisation and reception of pop music, 'past practice is something that cannot be fully replicated, but is rarely actively discarded, and continues in fragmentary form to be significant for present practice' (2002, 205), something that recalls the dismissive nature regarding Komuro's music seen in the comments by Martin and the participant in Koizumi's study. Is it possible to draw a definitive line between Komuro-as-composer, Komuro-as-producer and Komuro-as-performer?

These ideas chime with Thomas Hischak's discussions of 'multihyphenate' (2015, pp.109, 230, 376, 607) creators and how their existence problematises the classification of film composers. Does the title 'composer' necessitate the creation of a 'film score', or can it also include individuals responsible for the creation of any kind of 'movie music'? To what degree does the term 'composer' imply a career wholly devoted to compositional work, at the expense of other creative outputs, musical or otherwise? As Landon Palmer notes in his review of Hischak's *The Encyclopedia of Film Composers*, 'his distinction between film scoring and song scoring risks an unnecessarily limited approach to understanding a musician's fuller relationship to film music and how this informs their compositional techniques and style' (Palmer 2017, 121). As we have seen in the case of Komuro, the 'recognisability' of the melodic elements and use of synthesisers in the *Vampire Hunter D* soundtrack would remain an identifiable trend in his music for *City Hunter* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*, albeit in the shape of vocal-led songs as opposed to background music. Komuro was now essentially 'branded' under a new guise — TM Network — but on a level of pure functionality, he was still fulfilling the role of supplying musical accompaniment to animation. It is exactly this kind of distinction we must call into question when considering the career of a musician like Komuro. To what degree do his non-compositional activities — whether as popstar, record label executive or nightclub owner — eclipse his status as 'composer'? The answer lies, perhaps, in the flip side of the equation — in which it is precisely the act of scoring a film that confers 'validation' (Toop 1995, 77) or 'legitimation' (Donnelly 2001, 53) on a pop musician's career, presenting them with a highly marketable alternative route of promotion — and perhaps more importantly, a career option that would better withstand fickle public appetite and the star's inevitable ageing.

In this sense, we come full circle — returning to questions of image, both in a literal sense, and in terms of the careful crafting of a recognisable 'brand name'. Virgil Moorefield's *The*

Producer As Composer (2005) offers a way of conceptualising this cycle, where, in essence, the act of achieving validation effectively shifts the organisational guise of a producer-composer back into that of an 'auteur'. Drawing comparisons with 'star' or 'name-brand' producers like Phil Spector, famed for his trademark 'wall of sound' production style, he sees these all-in-one figures as emblematic of this process precisely because they succeeded in crafting strikingly original sounds that the public could readily associate with them.

Moorefield's account suggests an important reconfiguring of the role of the producer-composer from one located in a hidden, 'backroom' space, to one where their individual imprint is front-and-centre, core to the identity of the music itself (Moorefield 2005, xiv-xiii). As we saw earlier in the references to 'Komuro-kei', the awareness of Komuro's 'brand name' goes beyond simple name-recognition, but also includes identifiable sonic tropes or 'cliches' — the 'original sounds' that Moorefield is referring to — that enable a kind of aesthetic identification with the music and its position as a soundtrack to a particular time or place.

Indeed, for some, Komuro's individual agency was at the core of a wholesale reconfiguring of not only the Japanese music industry, but the creation of a new kind of awareness of what 'dance music' meant in Japan. 'It wasn't too long ago that when it came to dance music, most Japanese record labels didn't know the difference between trance and the macarena,' Steve McClure's 1990s compendium *Nippon Pop* jovially proclaims. 'That was before indie label Avex and producer Tetsuya Komuro entered the picture and blew apart the complacent Japanese music scene by making dance music one of the biggest success stories in the Japanese music biz' (McClure 1998, 84). McClure's account of the relationship between Komuro and Avex focuses heavily on the brand-name qualities of the label, claiming that at the time, dance music was 'virtually synonymous with Avex', and that the label had become one of Japan's top five record labels by the mid-1990s. Much of this success is attributed to a distinct business-savviness and marketing acumen, relying initially on the 'overseas' allure of imported dance records, before eventually morphing into the thrill of a 'new generation' (echoing Condry's 'new breed') of pop idols like Namie Amuro, for whom Komuro produced a multitude of best-selling singles. Additionally, in December 1994, Komuro launched the nightclub Velfarre⁴⁸ — a venture in which its reported 3 billion yen cost (£20,000,000) and glamorous decor openly recalled Japan's 'early bubble economy' (McClure 1998, 91). The

⁴⁸ Located in Tokyo's trendy Roppongi district, Velfarre boasted a capacity of 1500 people and at the time claimed to be the largest club/disco in Asia. Well known both for its taste in electronic dance music as well as the concerts it hosted for Avex artists, the venue would eventually close in January 2007.

real bubble may have burst by that point, but for Velfarre's club-goers, the dream could live on.

This heady mix of alluring nightlife opportunities and the lingering afterglow of Japan's economic boom were acted out by Komuro himself, who saw his lifestyle and work ethic at the time as 'vampiric' — his day typically starting at 5pm and continuing through the night to the early hours (McClure 1998, 87). At the time of McClure's interview with him, his annual income was estimated at between 3 billion and 4 billion yen (around £25,000,000). When Komuro-produced songs famously occupied the Top 5 positions in the Japanese hit singles chart, it is worth noting that all five were 'tie-ups' used as themes for TV shows or adverts (McClure 1998, 91). Just as *Get Wild* had benefited from its attachment to *City Hunter* and the alluring aesthetic it projected, right on through to the 1990s, Komuro was continually riding the wave of the 'media mix' ecology, his music inextricably linked with consumable 'product'. Reading McClure's book — which is to date by far the most extensive account in English in its coverage of Komuro (and, to many extents, Japanese pop music in general) — feels like entering a time capsule buried deep in the heart of the 1990s. What strikes the reader most is the sheer ubiquity of Komuro's presence within the wider landscape of the pop-cultural medium of the time. It is telling, of course, that by this point his identity, in McClure's introduction, makes no mention of his status as a composer. He is now merely a 'producer'. The inherent ambiguity of this term (producing *what?*), perhaps more than any, best embodies the notions of fluidity touched upon earlier, as well as being intimately linked with the creation of 'product'.

Just exactly what Komuro's music was 'producing' can be cast as part of a far larger narrative of music's role within Japanese society, and the cyclical creation of a series of 'new' Japans in tandem with the introduction of Western-influenced music to the country. Indeed, as Luciana Galliano notes, 'the creation of the figure of the composer' in Meiji-era Japan (1868-1912) was something completely alien, having not previously existed within traditional Japanese music (Galliano 2002, 33). Galliano sees the emergence of a newly urbanised Japan in the early 1900s as going hand in hand with the 'aim' of music producers creating popular hits with the explicit purpose of entertaining the masses. In this sense, popular music is not merely the product of a 'modern consumer society' (Galliano 2002, 108), but also one of the drivers behind that transformation. The notion of the society is important, because — as we have seen above — it was precisely the kind of societal 'miscellaneous knowledge' that Komuro's music represented for the subjects of Koizumi's study that compelled them to learn his tracks to sing at karaoke, the pressure to be part of something bigger.

In *Understanding Popular Culture*, Fiske observes that 'white patriarchal capitalism has failed to homogenize the thinking and the culture of its subjects.... Our societies are intransigently diverse, and this diversity is maintained by popular and cultural forces in the face of a variety of strategies of homogenization' (1991, 29). But what if, instead of a white patriarchal model of capitalism, we were to instead take the image of a harmonious, homogenous 1980s Japan (Kubota 2003, 73) as our subject? Would these kinds of cultural conditions give rise to a different kind of popular product, a different manner of engagement with it? It is perhaps in this light that we can better understand the emergence of karaoke culture within Japan, of the sense that — as Ogawa notes:

Karaoke can reinforce the sense of belonging within a group. With its wall of music, karaoke encloses a 'karaoke space'. People within it are thought to be friends... Both sharing 'a karaoke space' and singing in the presence of others reinforce group consciousness. (Ogawa 1998, 46)

For Ogawa, participating in karaoke is about more than simply inhabiting a shared space or friendship groups, it is about a shared consciousness, a group mindset that exists on a larger, societal level. While we must remain sceptical toward claims of 'group consciousness' — often seen as one of the most pervasive elements of the nationalist discourse known as *nihonjinron* (Odin 1992, 476), which attempts to attribute 'unique' traits to Japanese national and cultural identity — we can read Ogawa's comments in tandem with the earlier reference to 'songs known in common among friends' to visualise what Kosaku Yoshino calls the 'imagined family' of a 'kin group' or 'in-group' mentality (Yoshino 1998, 20). Through a direct, binary us vs. them opposition (i.e. those that know Komuro's songs, vs. those that don't) we can more readily see, just as Koizumi's study indicates, the inherent social peer-pressure present in this kind of system. Here, the 'desire' to be part of the 'in-group' amplifies the value of Komuro's product, and in turn, it is valuable precisely because it is 'popular' (i.e. known by many people, and thus a larger 'in-group'). At face-value, singing along to Komuro's music at karaoke is simply about engaging in a fun social activity with friends — but for this to contain meaning, it is first crucial for the 'enclosed' space Ogawa references to be occupied. When *Get Wild's* lyrics speak of 'your dream... my dream... somebody's dream', it is as if Komuro's brand-name image becomes everybody's image, a plasticised emptiness that, in an osmosis-like manner, demands to be filled — whether by a succession of processed dance-pop starlets, colourful anime characters, or by countless karaoke fans up and down the country. Here, Komuro's identity is not so much that of a specifically

'Japanese' composer, but rather, his music is fulfilling the function by which Japanese karaoke-going consumers can feel validated (and included) as part of a clearly delineated group. In turn, because this 'in-group' comes to represent *popular* tastes, it by extension also takes on the quality of 'Japaneseness' as social identity, in line with Fiske's earlier observation that — as commodity — these songs 'can be used by the consumer to construct meanings of self, of social identity and social relations' (1991, 11).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to illustrate the value — commercial or otherwise — in music attached to anime and how this manifested itself during Japan's economic boom as a particular kind of aspirational aesthetic, utilising the career of Tetsuya Komuro as a case study through which to focus my lens of analysis.

Building on Clements's history of the anime industry during the period, and utilising Fiske's theories of popular productivity and the commodities of culture, I have situated anime music as part of a process of production and consumption which engenders a creation of meanings and pleasures for its audience. As part of a wider media mix of associated goods, anime music-as-commodity acted as a popular text not only designed to specifically appeal to a new breed of Japanese consumers partaking in a newly matured kind of anime, but it also actively reflected their desires, values and social identities.

Beginning with his early soundtrack work on *Vampire Hunter D*, Tetsuya Komuro would develop a strikingly recognisable production style based around memorable melodies and synthesised, European-influenced dance music. This would prove incredibly popular with audiences when turned to the role of providing theme music for the *City Hunter* and *Mobile Suit Gundam* franchises. With a mix of English and Japanese lyrics creating an auditory space of liberated pleasure and play, Komuro's music projected an exciting image of aspiration in tune with the times.

These pleasures would open themselves up to audiences in a participatory manner through the medium of karaoke and the popularity of 'tie-up' songs for its users. The commonality or popularity of Komuro's music proved to be an apt fit for the demands of the karaoke medium — namely, 'songs known in common among friends'. This analysis of the specific

'functionality' of Komuro's compositions can be observed not only in light of it acting as a kind of social glue for karaoke-goers — a required societal knowledge — but also the extended afterlife it has given his music (and its attached anime) via a keen sense of nostalgia.

Lastly, I have examined the complexities inherent in Komuro's status as a multihyphenate creator — both of and not-of an auditory Japaneseness, both producer and composer. This hybridity can be seen particularly in relation to Komuro's status as a kind of 'brand name' that encompassed both his multitude and fluidity of roles, but also his presence as a larger-than-life figure as part of the wider societal backdrop of the time and the modern consumer lifestyle his music was inevitably part of — a systemised kind of music for a systemised kind of culture.

As multifaceted as Komuro's career during Japan's economic bubble was, it represents only one piece of the wider picture that encompasses the totality of music created for anime during the period, as well as how it was both produced and consumed. Future work would incorporate a closer specific focus on Opening and Ending themes (anisong) during the 1980s, charting a course from the swarm of mecha shows that sprang up following the success of the *Mobile Suit Gundam* franchise, to the rise of the female 'idol' as a fundamental symbol of the 1980s pop landscape in Japan and how this, too, meshed with the kind of anime aesthetic being produced at the time.

Chapter 3: Yōko Kanno and beyond — searching for nostalgia in anime music from Japan's 'Lost Decade'

Introduction

When Japan's economic bubble burst in 1991, it would mark the start of a prolonged period of financial stagnation that would see the next ten years dubbed 'The Lost Decade' (*Ushinawareta Jūnen*). In stark contrast to the opulence and aspiration of the 1980s, falling real-term wages and stagnant price levels saw ravenous consumption give way to a more cautious, hesitant mood amongst the nation's consumers. These shifts would be felt in popular media such as anime and music too, with the dreams and hopes of previous generations increasingly ringing hollow to Japanese entering the workforce in these turbulent times. Those soundtracking this era, such as iconic anime composer Yōko Kanno, would explore new auditory frontiers to reflect the melancholy of these 'lost years'.

Today, Kanno stands as one of Japan's most acclaimed composers, and her work has frequently served the role of capturing and galvanising the 'mood of the nation' in its use soundtracking pivotal moments in Japanese contemporary history including the first anniversary of the devastating 2011 earthquake and tsunami⁴⁹ and on the enthronement of current emperor Naruhito in 2019.⁵⁰ Outside of Japan, however, Kanno is best known for her considerable body of soundtrack work for televised anime, and it is indeed within this field that she would make her name throughout the 1990s and 2000s, creating the background music and theme songs for many of the medium's most popular shows at a time when awareness and viewership of anime was increasingly opening up beyond Japan's own shores. Kanno's musical roots date back to an early age — Born in Sendai, Japan in 1963, she would experience music as a child while attending church with her parents (who would only allow her to listen to classical music). This would run in tandem with both piano lessons and composition contests. Attending Waseda University, her musical palette would broaden

⁴⁹ Japanese national broadcaster NHK commissioned the song *Hana wa Saku (Flowers Will Bloom)*, with music composed by Kanno and lyrics by director Shunji Iwai to build public support for the 3.11 disaster recovery efforts, with royalties generated by the song directed toward the affected areas.

⁵⁰ Kanno composed the three-movement, 13-minute suite *Ray of Water* for the enthronement of Naruhito — vocals for the piece were performed by popular Japanese boyband Arashi.

as she began to play music alongside friends as well as transcribing music for them. While still at university, she would be asked by a videogame company to soundtrack one of their latest releases, ushering in the start of her professional career (Tomita 2014).



Figure 8: Yōko Kanno in a promotional image for her 2008 compilation album *CM Yōko*.

Rose Bridges' short volume *Yoko Kanno's Cowboy Bebop Soundtrack* (2017) was notable in being the first book-length study in English devoted to a single anime soundtrack, attributing primacy to the musical component of one of the 1990s' best-loved classic series. Utilising Bridges's work and other previous commentary on Kanno as a foundation, this chapter will seek to situate a broader analysis of her compositional style, and that of a number of her contemporaries, against the backdrop of Japan in the 1990s. Despite drawing prolifically from 'imported' musical idioms such as jazz and classical music, I would argue that Kanno in fact imbues her music with a sense of nostalgia that is intrinsically linked to the wider 'feel' of Japan at that point in time, a thematic resonance which places it within a long lineage of aesthetic 'longing' for something the listener can no longer obtain. In doing so, I seek to introduce new complexities to the meanings of value and purpose when questioning anime music as an artistic medium, positioning it as a core element within the kind of escapist 'world-building' that saw anime become an increasingly welcome retreat to those overwhelmed by the all-too-real pressures of Japan's faltering economy.

Why is a study of anime music in the 1990s so crucial to understanding many of the themes, resonances and archetypes that are so central to this form of creative pop cultural output? Can we observe tangible changes in the kinds of meaning created by and extracted from this

music in contrast to prior decades? In their introduction to historiography, Spalding and Parker discuss cultural history as inextricably tied into these very notions of ‘the often unarticulated, but deeply embedded value systems held by the majority of society’ and that by extension, popular culture is invariably ‘the embodiment of a way of life, or a social sensibility’. Of particular relevance to our argument, they see this sensibility as one that promotes a positive view of the culture of the past, and is regretful at its passing (Spalding and Parker 2007, 125-127). By way of ‘traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms’ the process of self-identification amongst this societal majority is fashioned ‘entirely within the sphere of popular culture’. For Spalding and Parker, it is precisely this stress on ‘identity’ that better affords us ‘increased understanding of the experiences of the past’ (2007, 134, 144). Thus, it is in this balance between the past and its passing — felt through the sensibilities and aesthetic possibilities of nostalgia — that we might envision anime and its music as a pop-cultural crucible for Japan’s own continuing formulation of its own self-identity, a way of drawing out and articulating what might at first seem unarticulatable.

By presenting anime music in the 1990s as a kind of nexus for a multitude of specific tropes and traditions, I would position the decade as indicative of a kind of rebirth or ‘new paradigm’ for the ‘sound’ of anime, albeit one deeply indebted to the emotional and aesthetic resonances held within Japan’s cultural history. The auditory feel of the decade, its surface texture, would offer up a newness that revelled in the possibilities of technologically-enabled sounds, but its deeper essence would be concerned by older questions — in situating the individual amidst memories of Japan that both elided and supported the structures of the present day, how could music bridge the gap in a confused present that seemed constantly in search of what the country’s musical ‘past’ might sound like and represent? By combining and enfolding these aspects within the guise of the ‘new’, I seek to illustrate how composers like Yōko Kanno, as well as a number of her contemporaries including Joe Hisaishi, Kenji Kawai and Susumu Hirasawa, acted as sonic mediators, guiding listeners into uncharted waters — one eye (and ear) looking to the past, but the other firmly fixed on the present.

Part 1: A certain sense of longing — Sonic tropes as a compositional case study

Histories of Japan’s transition from the 1980s into the 1990s invariably fashion the death of Emperor Hirohito⁵¹ in 1989 as portentous, an ‘end of an era’ foreshadowing that would mark an uneasy decline into ill times. From the dizzying heights of 1980s optimism in which ‘the

⁵¹ Emperor Hirohito, also known as the Shōwa Emperor (1901-1989). Reigned 1926-1989, encompassing Japan’s rising militarism in the 1930s, World War 2, and the nation’s subsequent post-war recovery toward its status as one of the world’s leading economic powers.

grounds of the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo... was worth more on paper than all of the real estate in California' (Stalker 2018, 366), governmental attempts to reduce inflation and a rise in interest rates in 1990 quickly resulted in a credit crunch, with the Nikkei stock index falling by over 80 percent and major Japanese banks receiving billions of dollars-worth of taxpayer bailouts. These 'zombie banks' would run in tandem with 'zombie firms', which the banks would continually inject funds into in an effort to keep them afloat, leading to a situation where many fundamentally unsustainable firms were maintained on artificial life support, but were too riddled with debt to do more than tread water. The worst, however, was yet to come. The twin disasters of 1995 — the January 17 Great Hanshin Earthquake which devastated the city of Kobe, and the March 20 gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system by members of the religious cult Aum Shinrikyo — would, along with a population that was rapidly aging, 'create a sense of threat to Japanese society' (2018, 366-368), a feeling that Japan's 'best years' were very possibly behind it.

Conversely, Japan's litany of woes would emerge at a time when the anime industry was seeing some of its greatest successes to date, culminating in 1997 when the top six films at the Japanese box office for that year were all anime productions (Funamoto 1998, 163, cited in Clements 2013, 187). This snapshot would encompass both big screen outings of popular cult series like *Neon Genesis Evangelion*,⁵² as well as perennial 'vacation' favourites aimed at kids such as the *Doraemon* and *Boy Detective Conan* franchises. Besting them all was *Princess Mononoke*, Studio Ghibli's 10.7 billion Yen-grossing box office success. However, the top-level dominance of blockbusters like this would also often obscure ill-fated attempts to replicate their success — something even Studio Ghibli themselves were not immune to, with 1999's *My Neighbours the Yamadas* failing to achieve even a fraction of the revenue made by *Princess Mononoke* two years prior. Japanese distributors would increasingly eye the 'long tail' of revenue made possible by foreign sales, often lasting for years after the production's original airing in Japan. In conjunction with this — and in an attempt to head off potential bidding wars — foreign distributors would often act proactively, coming on board as co-producers at an earlier stage in the production cycle. One of the most prominent examples of this would be British distributor Manga Entertainment's⁵³ contribution of 30% of

⁵² *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (*Shinseiki Evangerion*) aired 1995-1996, TV Tokyo. Highly influential series known for 'deconstructing' the staple 'robot' archetype within anime by introducing complex psychological themes. These build toward a conclusion in which the collective souls of mankind are merged together in the belief that this will finally end the ennui of loneliness and alienation that has plagued humanity throughout its existence. Numerous remake films followed in the 2000s, by which point total sales of goods related to the franchise had totalled over ¥150 billion.

⁵³ Manga Entertainment was established in the late 1980s as a subsidiary of the music label Island Records. They became renowned in the 90s as one of the leading distributors of anime in the anglophone world, with an eye toward productions that had a particularly edgy or explicit feel, popular

the budget for *Ghost in the Shell* (1995),⁵⁴ precisely in order to ‘pre-empt competition for foreign rights’ (Clements 2013, 185). This influx of foreign revenue would swell throughout the 1990s, ultimately reaching some 50 percent of annual income for some anime studios by the mid 2000s (2013, 188).

Clements’s characterisation of the 1990s anime industry by way of two core trends — domestic market saturation and overseas capital — gives a sound foundation of the financial drivers behind domestic production as well as an increasingly candid awareness and courting of international markets. Casting the decade in stark contrast to prior years, Lamarre expands on this to suggest that it was anime’s perceived shift away from an easily classifiable and consistent ‘genre’ toward an increasingly digitally enabled medium that would cast the narrative of anime in the 1990s as one of ‘technicity’ — that the changing circumstances of its creation would lead to a corresponding change in its ‘technical existence’ (Lamarre 2018, 5). In other words, by fundamentally changing the input parameters or enablers behind anime’s production, its very nature as a medium would also alter. In an effort to draw closer to what exactly these enablers were, there remains the persistent question of what was coalescing within Japanese consumers at such a national scale to lead, in 1997, to the predominance at the box office of animated content? Likewise, for the international distributors ‘buying into’ Japanese animated content, what was it precisely that they were buying into, and why did it matter that it was Japanese in nature? To answer these questions, to tease a narrative out of the ‘solid’ state of the past historical realities of Japan in the 1990s, is to engage in the difficult act of ‘casual connection’. For Spalding and Parker, the causal connections of history rarely unfold with the simple linearity of a snooker table (cue hits ball, ball hits another ball, ball drops into pocket). And yet, it is the very complexity of historical reality that necessitates the need for comprehensible narratives or of a mapping out of connections that see the component threads pulled into a singular whole. Narratives give ‘purpose, motion and direction’, but more than that, they provide us the means to trace backward toward the ‘sufficient conditions’ (Spalding and Parker 2007, 48-49) that act as their generative origin, the elements that dictate why these causal connections sprung into being precisely when they did.

with anime’s cult audience at the time. In 2019, the company was acquired by Sony, as part of the Japanese conglomerate’s efforts to consolidate its anime-related activities globally.

⁵⁴ The 1995 film adaptation of *Ghost in the Shell* (also known as *Kōkaku Kidōtai — Mobile Armored Riot Police*) was based on an earlier manga by Masamune Shirow that ran between 1989-1990 in Kodansha’s *Weekly Young Magazine*. The cyberpunk themed narrative portrays the operations of an elite Japanese counter-terrorism unit and delves heavily into philosophical and sociological issues. The franchise would prove an early favourite amongst anime fandom outside of Japan, and would receive numerous follow-up installments incorporating films, a number of TV series and video games.

The career of composer Yōko Kanno serves as a particularly useful case study by which to identify a central locus or anchor to solidify my analysis of anime music in Japan in the 1990s around. With her material pushing at the boundaries of what sorts of sounds anime music incorporated, it stands as a richly detailed canvass by which to seek out emotional resonances and musical ‘feel’ in addition to more overt classifications of musical genre or instrumentation. Due to her role in the creation of the soundtrack for *Cowboy Bebop* (1998-1999)⁵⁵ — acclaimed by both critics and fans as one of, if not *the*, greatest televised anime of all time (Olson and Reinhard 2020, 39-41) — Kanno has become one of the most internationally recognised names working within the anime industry, and is now a frequent focus for studies of anime music (Bridges 2017, Granade 2018, Jurkiewicz 2019). However, I would argue that this fetishisation of *Cowboy Bebop* and its music as a peerless exemplar of anime in the 1990s — indeed, as a kind of representational gateway to the medium of anime as a whole — obscures the variety and breadth of Kanno’s compositional output beyond that series, as well as the wider sonic landscape of anime music during the decade.

Clements suggests that, for many viewers outside the Japan, the 1990s acted as ‘a moment of illumination’ in which they received their first exposure to anime — whether that be in the form of cult adult-orientated sci-fi films such as *Akira* or *Ghost in the Shell*, or in the latter wave of kid-orientated TV shows heralded by the remarkable success of the *Pokemon* franchise. For Clements, the valorisation of these ‘moments’ casts many prior historical narratives of anime — both within fandom and academia — in a ‘teleological’ sense (Clements 2013, 177), defined by an explanation of the components that make up that history in terms of the purpose they serve as opposed to the cause by which they arise. It is with this in mind that I seek to refigure and situate a history of anime and its music in the 1990s as not only purposeful, but that these purposes were specific causal outcomes of the kinds of material being produced in Japan at the time. By extension, we might then come to a better understanding of why that material looked and sounded the way it did — that in coalescing around a certain typology of content, anime and its accompanying music were reflecting a certain set of aesthetic inputs which ‘spoke’ to the societal realities of 1990s Japan.

In an attempt to broaden the scope of previous discussions of Kanno’s musical output, this chapter aims to define the ‘sound’ of her work through the 1990s as fundamentally tied to the

⁵⁵ *Cowboy Bebop* (*Kaubōi Bibappu*) aired 1998, TV Tokyo, and subsequently 1998-1999 on satellite network WOWOW. Set in the year 2071, the series follows the lives of a group of bounty hunters and draws heavily from classic sci-fi, Western and noir tropes. Its US broadcast on Cartoon Network in 2001 (and subsequent re-airings) is often credited as highly influential in introducing anime to new audiences outside of Japan.

themes of nostalgia and longing, of which *Cowboy Bebop's* soundtrack is merely one manifestation amongst many. What links these distinct works, and what significance can be drawn from the tropes found in common between them? With Japan's economic fragility during the decade underscored by the approach of the new millennium, I seek to examine how attempts to salve increasing anxieties about 'newness' would emerge in comforting, but often skewed returns to the old and familiar. With the formative decades of the anime industry now firmly in the past, the medium's intersection with notions of genre and viewership would become increasingly meta-textual and self-referential. Shows would look to 'deconstruct' received conventions, and music — often placed strikingly and incongruously against corresponding visuals — would play a key role in establishing this trend. In counterpoint to the view that anime music in the 1990s was often limited to being 'purely illustrative of... pre-established creative trajectories' (Newman 2016, 19), I would suggest that it was in fact music itself that created the foundations for shaping these self-same trajectories. Animated depictions of new, unknown worlds may dazzle us visually, but it was the recurring musical tropes offered in soundtracks such as those created by Kanno — I suggest — that allowed Japanese audiences of the time to truly feel and make sense of them, whilst at the same time using this to inform their position within the real world too.

Part of what would make Yōko Kanno's career throughout the 1990s emblematic of wider currents in Japan's intersecting pop-cultural spheres is her early transition from the video game industry to the anime industry. This move would be highly indicative of wider trends within Japan's associated media infrastructures in which gaming was increasingly becoming a larger part of the 'media mix' of which anime also formed a core component of (Clements 2013, 192-194). Further amplified by the rise of mobile phone and internet usage, Japanese consumers were becoming more and more enmeshed in what Lamarre views as a transformation away from merely 'television' and toward a generalised sense of 'new media' (2018, 241, 244). Lamarre's definition is crucial in that it ultimately widens the definition of new media beyond its typical connotations — namely, media forms that are either computer-generated or rely on computers for their distribution (Manovich 2003, 13-25) — toward a more complex understanding of distribution infrastructures that are not merely 'post television' (Lamarre 2018, 3, 28) but also fundamentally linked to the social existence of both producers and consumers. While many aspects of the 1990s media ecology in Japan — e.g. video games and electronic music — would serve as prime examples of this 'new media' ecology, I suggest that they are ultimately evolutions of tendencies that stretch both forward and backward in time. As we have seen earlier in Jenkins's comments about the reusability of media and the dynamic that sees those within a predefined community (whether in the capacity of producers or consumers) converging toward shared fantasies and values

(Jenkins 2018, 204), new media inevitably embodies the old. It is against this backdrop that we can conceive of composers like Kanno as part of a generation of creators for whom the confines of the ‘anime industry’ would represent only one component of a far broader portfolio of work, and through the creative necessities required to compose for a wide range of media outputs, find their work absorbing a broad range of stylistic influences.

An indicative example of this broad sonic palette can be found in the composition *Beyond The Clouds*, taken from the soundtrack to *Nobunaga's Ambition Haōden* (1992). Kanno had been composing material for the *Nobunaga's Ambition*⁵⁶ video game series — which allows players to take part in a ‘Historical Simulation’ of Japan’s *Sengoku*, or warring states, period (circa 1482-1565) — since 1986, and as computer technology improved in its capacity to reflect fully layered musical compositions, the complexity of her recordings would grow in tandem. In *Beyond The Clouds*, gentle flute melodies, bells and harp conjure up an image of Japanese antiquity, as seen through the eyes of not only classical compositional technique, but a need to offer a ‘backdrop’ to an on-screen game world. The result is an at-times odd juxtaposition of traditional Japanese melodies with electronic minimalism — at once both old and new, Eastern and Western, analogue and digital. Through the gap between these extremes, a sense of longing or ‘reaching’ emerges, a sense of the music endlessly trying to resolve itself through an entangling between these oppositions. As a formative work, *Beyond The Clouds* highlights how even at this comparatively early stage of her career, Kanno understood the power of offering a ‘feeling’ of quasi-familiarity to listeners, an almost *deja-vu*-like hinting toward something that you feel is known to you, but is in fact exotically new in nature. This tendency would often manifest itself in a very literal sense — namely, Kanno would re-use many of the melodies and themes from these early compositions in later, more polished efforts after her subsequent transition to composing for anime. A notable example of this would be the track *The Tower of Babel*, taken from an album of orchestral work created for an art gallery in 1991 — Kanno would directly appropriate her own melody in the track *Sóra*, taken from the soundtrack of *Escaflowne — The Movie* (2000).

Tracing sonic ‘through-currents’ like these across Kanno’s career offers one means of finding veins of familiarity within her music across disparate points in time. Through the explication of these kinds of sonic tropes, we move closer to the emphasis on ‘identity’ which — as highlighted in the introduction — Spalding and Parker see as crucial to situating an

⁵⁶ The *Nobunaga's Ambition* (*Nobunaga no Yabō*) series of turn-based strategy video games has released over 10 instalments since the first in 1987. Set in feudal Japan, the goal of the games is to achieve the aim of historical warlord Oda Nobunaga: the conquest and unification of the nation. The series as a whole has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide.

understanding of the past. We might read, for example, in Kanno's 'combinatory' soundtracks for the *Nobunaga's Ambition* series an attempt to rationalise the distance between Japan's past and its present for the contemporary audience of video-gamers the music was designed for. For some, this conflation of the 'high culture' of national history with the mass-culture of video games and anime may seem facile, but it is also highly indicative of the postmodernist tendencies of the 1990s identified by critics such as Fredric Jameson. For him, the 'landscape' of the 'aesthetic popular' thrives precisely on this kind of juxtaposition — a world defined by 'grade-B Hollywood film' and 'materials they no longer simply 'quote', but incorporate into their very substance' (Jameson 1991, 54-55). It is this 'incorporation' that we will see time and time again throughout Kanno's music — a very 'personal' kind of musical connoisseurship that sees Kanno herself as a kind of fan, working in her favourite influences into her own creative output.

Kanno's first compositional work specifically for anime would be for the four-part direct-to-video OVA (Original Video Animation) release *Macross Plus* (1994)⁵⁷ co-directed by Shōji Kawamori and Shinichirō Watanabe. A close analysis of the project's musical content and its intersection with the animation's themes formed the basis for my earlier MA thesis (Green, 2017), in which I drew conclusions centring around the idea of the production acting as both a nexus and new paradigm for various stylistic tropes and paradigms, both visually and auditorily re-mixing and re-defining familiar genre conventions into a singular whole. The very nature of *Macross Plus*, which commentators have seen as a kind of high-budget 'experiment' in producing an intentionally Hollywood-esque anime — some going as far as to call it an 'uncredited reimagining' of 1986's *Top Gun* (Newman 2016, 18) — is reflective of Kanno's own frequent co-opting of 'non-Japanese' musical genres into her own compositions. The 'international' feel of the music would extend to Kanno enlisting the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra to record the soundtrack (Jurkiewicz 2019, 114).

Tendencies toward the international and transnational would emerge most noticeably in another of Kanno's formative works of the 1990s when she provided the soundtrack for *Magnetic Rose* — one of three short segments conceived as part of the anthology film *Memories* (1995)⁵⁸ helmed by *Akira's* Katsuhiro Otomo as executive producer. The segment

⁵⁷ The original *Macross* series (*Chōjū Yōsai Makurosu*) aired 1982-1983, MBS, kickstarting an epic sci-fi franchise centering around pilotable robots in a similar vein to *Mobile Suit Gundam*. Future instalments, such as *Macross Plus* (*Makurosu Purasu*, 1994) have continued to play on the franchise's core premise, a combination of science-fiction battles, romance and music.

⁵⁸ *Memories* compiled together three short films based on Katsuhiro Otomo's manga short stories. With the latter two segments — *Stink Bomb* (*Saishū-heiki*) and *Canon Fodder* (*Taihō no Machi*) — taking a more satirical, allegorical tone, the more serious look and feel of the *Magnetic Rose* (*Kanojo no Omoide*) portion saw it hailed by critics as by far the strongest of the three.

— directed by Kōji Morimoto⁵⁹ and with a screenplay by Satoshi Kon⁶⁰ — is a deft combination of sci-fi and horror movie tropes that heavily echo classics such as 1979's *Alien*. The short film sees a deep space salvage freighter responding to a distress signal sent out by a giant space station. Once inside the station, the salvage team find lavish European-styled interiors that are falling away into decay. As the team search for the source of the signal, the plot becomes increasingly unsettling as the salvagers become more and more unsure of their own perceptions and memories, the distressingly weird space station all too apparent in its unwillingness to relinquish its grip on them.

This deeply unsettling backdrop, blending decaying Baroque European interiors with 'hard' science-fiction elements is mirrored in Kanno's soundtrack, which conjures up a decadently 'traditional' classical feel straight out of an opera house, but inflects it with barely perceptible sonic alterations such as oddly echoing reverb and pulsing electronic machinery that leaves the listener on a knife edge. Distorted snippets of real opera repertoire such as *Madame Butterfly* and *Tosca* are also included on the soundtrack. Here, Kanno innovatively maps the decayed surroundings of the film's setting into the audio dimension, our 'hearing' of these well-known opera arias offered as a deteriorated experience that plays with our own perception of memory. What we hear is so close to what we know, but, crucially and terrifyingly, is not quite the same. This culminates in the five-minute long piece *Mad Butterfly* which is the most overt in subverting and reworking Puccini's classic *Madame Butterfly* theme into a new composition. On a meta-textual level, the choice of *Madame Butterfly* may feel particularly apt — being, as it is, an interpretation of Japan from 'without'. Here, recycled back into a purely Japanese composition, like *Macross Plus* and its aping of *Top Gun*, it becomes symbolic of the kinds of 're-mixing' that would define Kanno's musical career.

Kanno's deft utilisation of the power of classical orchestration would continue in her soundtrack for the 1996 television series *The Vision of Escaflowne*.⁶¹ Here, alongside her then-husband Hajime Mizoguchi, with whom she had previously worked on the soundtrack

⁵⁹ Kōji Morimoto (1959-). Japanese animator and director, as well as co-founder of Studio 4°C. Noted for the striking quality of his animation work — as seen in scenes created by him for *Macross Plus* — he would also direct a segment of *The Animatrix* (2003), the animated spin-off to popular Hollywood franchise *The Matrix* (1999).

⁶⁰ Satoshi Kon (1963-2010). Japanese director, animator, screenwriter and manga author. Kon would become best known for his acclaimed films *Perfect Blue* (*Pāfekuto Burū*, 1997), *Millennium Actress* (*Sennen Joyū*, 2001), *Tokyo Godfathers* (*Tōkyō Goddofāzazu*, 2003), and *Paprika* (*Papurika*, 2006), before his early death from pancreatic cancer in 2010.

⁶¹ *The Vision of Escaflowne* (*Tenkū no Esukafurōne*) aired 1996, TV Tokyo. In the series, teenage girl Hitomi finds herself transported to a mystical alternate world. Here, she is swiftly caught up in a brutal struggle against the oppressive Zaibach Empire, a battle in which both her fortune-telling powers and the arcane robot known as 'Escaflowne' will prove instrumental.

for *Please Save My Earth*⁶² (Drazen 2003, 288-297), Kanno would seek to conjure up a notably 'European' vein of epic fantasy to match the series' visuals. Beginning with title track *The Vision of Escaflowne* and its use of low-pitched Gregorian chant, the soundtrack continually aims toward the evocation of an arcane, medieval setting. But Kanno surprises us by introducing — a minute into the track — sharply electronic drum machine percussion, conjuring up an effect similar to that of German dance music outfit Enigma, who had risen to prominence in Europe in the early 1990s. This contrast reflects the show's own meddling with the formula of anime's 'mecha' (giant robot) genre and its insertion of high technology into a fantasy setting. Elsewhere in the soundtrack, Kanno's allusions toward classical repertoire would be even more marked, the dramatic *Dance of Curse*, for example, openly parallels Carl Orf's *O Fortuna* with impressive intensity. In *Arcadia*, which stretches to five minutes in length, there is a palpably 'epic' feel that incorporates full orchestral vocals and richly orchestrated string sections, while in the tear-jerking *Farewell*, a tender piano melody is gently laid over interweaved swells of strings. The above attempt to capture an essence of the scope of the *Escaflowne* soundtrack — bringing orchestral quality classical music to televised anime — offers up one defining trope of Kanno's musical 'make-up'. Another is to be found in the fact that she would provide not only the background music, but also create the vocal-led opening theme, on this occasion sung by Maya Sakamoto, the voice actress for the show's heroine Hitomi Kanzaki. Long-running collaborative partnerships would become another defining 'trope' of Kanno's career, both in the case of singers such as Maya Sakamoto — who she would work with again on the opening themes to *Record of Lodoss War* and *Cardcaptor Sakura* — but most notably, in her creative pairing with *Macross Plus*'s Shinichirō Watanabe.

Indeed, it was Kanno's pairing with Watanabe that what was to become her most iconic soundtrack — for 1998's *Cowboy Bebop* — would emerge. The show's masterful blend of popular tropes from both the cowboy Western and sci-fi genres has seen it become a 'defining work' not only within anime, but also setting the template for many similar 'space Westerns' since (Granade 2018, 21). In an effort to avoid re-covering much of the close-analysis offered by Bridges' (2017) study of the *Cowboy Bebop* soundtrack, I instead seek to offer a more specifically located analysis of the show's music, considering how — through an encapsulation of a certain pioneer or 'frontier' spirit — it acts as a kind of sonic amplifier for nostalgia. For Granade, a potent cocktail of 'nostalgia, anxiety, and hope' remains the

⁶² *Please Save My Earth (Boku no Chikyū o Mamotte)* was released as a six-part direct-to-video 'OVA' series, beginning in 1993. It was based on a manga series running from 1986-1994 in the female-orientated magazine *Hana to Yume*. The story centres around a group of youngsters who share collective dreams about the previous lives as alien scientists observing the Earth from the Moon.

defining trait of 'frontier' narratives, encompassing everything from the traditional American Western, right through to the 'final' frontier of space, represented by the likes of *Star Trek*, and *Cowboy Bebop* itself (2018, 1-4). For those trapped in the malaise of Japan's economic woes, and the 'threat' of disasters or terrorism (the latter of which surfaces as a plot element at numerous points during both the series and its subsequent film incarnation), the frontier represented by *Cowboy Bebop*'s space-bound setting offers a tantalisingly alternate 'cultural identity' existing beyond the humdrum of everyday reality.

The apparent 'freedom' of *Cowboy Bebop* and its soundtrack, the way it remixes and reassembles familiar images and sounds into new dynamic patterns, lies at the core of what Pirkle sees as a *modus operandi* of experimentation without 'fear of risky things' (Pirkle 2011, 164). As the series' opening theme *Tank!* plays out — sizzling jazz riffs blasting from the speakers as a rhythmic bassline propels us toward each week's episode — we see on-screen snatches of lines that remind us of the jazz genre's origins in 1940s Harlem. The message is clear: to create a 'new genre', we must base its foundations on the pioneers that have come before us. To be 'new' is, it seems, to also be 'old'. The model of nostalgia put forth by *Cowboy Bebop*'s opening theme is one in deep debt to the innovation offered by creative 'scenes' and the individuals that come together as part of them (Tembo 2019, 227). Thus, in Kanno's formation of a band — The Seatbelts — specifically to perform the music from the show's soundtrack, we see an attempt to emulate this vibe of authentic musical 'spirit' on the meta-textual level of the show (and its music) itself. This would even extend toward the relationship between Kanno — as composer — and the show's director — Watanabe — in a dynamic whereby 'Kanno and Watanabe worked in a circular fashion, with Kanno composing songs for the show that Watanabe would use as inspiration for new scenes which would in turn provide Kanno with new ideas for songs' (Granade 2018, 22). Thus, we might — without exaggeration — say that the music of *Cowboy Bebop*, 'created' the show itself, acting as genesis as opposed to add-on. For Kanno, this creative collaborative relationship, both between herself and Watanabe, but also in regards to Watanabe's relationship with music itself would define a particular 'felt' value of emotional resonance, one that harks back to memories of high school days:

It's like that delicate and earnest feeling of when you're a junior high school student, and you give your favorite music to someone of the opposite sex so that they would understand you... Sometimes [Watanabe] even seems to value the music over the story. (Bridges 2017, 4)

Building on the theme of music as interwoven with persona, the creative entity embodied by Kanno's band The Seatbelts as a 'construct' within the show's wider 'paraphernalia' of

creative talent would come to hold such a degree of emotional ‘value’ in relation to the series that, in 2020 — in the midst of the Coronavirus-enforced lockdown — Kanno would re-assemble the band members of The Seatbelts for a performance of *Cowboy Bebop*’s opening theme as part of a ‘virtual session’⁶³ in which they performed their parts separately and were then edited together into a single video. Another re-mixing, for another age — or, perhaps more appropriately, ‘putting the band back together’.

Cowboy Bebop’s spiky, impactful opening theme *Tank!* has served to galvanize discourse of the jazz inspired elements within the soundtrack, while the existence of scholarship like *Blue Nippon* (Atkins 2001) has served as a bedrock to ground *Cowboy Bebop*’s jazz elements within a long history of jazz appreciation and performance within Japan. Kanno herself appears cognisant of these, at times, problematic arguments, expressing her frustration at not being able to match the ‘coolness’ of ‘black music’ and observing that within the realms of musical imitation, ‘if there’s white funk, let there be yellow funk’ (Tomita 2014). Kanno’s desire to somehow ‘own’, or at the very least re-interpret a genre of music within an appellation of ‘Japaneseness’ speaks to an effort to somehow historicise and codify that musical trajectory, to make it more than simply an individual creative effort. In this sense, in observing the variety of genres that the *Cowboy Bebop* soundtrack takes in, perhaps it is not so much a case of Kanno’s music being representative of a multitude of genres, but rather, that her compositional method simply sees her attempting to ‘fit’ her output into various different genre-shaped boxes at any given time. Thus, across the soundtrack, we see songs like *Blue*, which takes the form of a guitar driven power ballad very much in the vein of 4 Non Blondes’ *What’s Up?* or Alanis Morissette’s *Ironic*. Elsewhere, *Rain* operates within a similar sense of epic scale — propelled by church organ riffs and recalls Guns N’ Roses’ *November Rain*. These songs feel like attempts by Kanno to emulate musical heroes (or the styles they work in), precisely because the act of doing so draws the creator closer to an elusive origin point of ‘coolness’. While there is scope to suggest that these creative influences perhaps act as a kind of unfair ‘borrowing’ of said musical coolness, I would counter that Kanno’s adoption and open adoration of past musical icons is a crucial dimension of the tolerances at work in what Napier sees as the ‘festival’-like mode of anime as medium. As she puts it: ‘As with the festival space itself, the space of animation is one that allows for experimentation, fluidity, transformation, and ultimately an entry into a world more radically Other than anything in conventional live-action cinema’ (Napier 2005, 31). Kanno’s style is fundamentally informed by ‘influence’, but it is in the ‘transformation’ that the value is found.

⁶³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VsgkIE-RHg>

If there is one track on the *Cowboy Bebop* soundtrack that is most indicative of Kanno's 'own' sound — or rather, the musical feel she would most frequently return to throughout her career — it is *Green Bird*. Here, the choral — almost nursery rhyme like — elements used to such effect in her prior work for *Macross Plus* and *Escaflowne* are this time conjoined to a revolving, simple piano riff. The feel here is of a timeless, treasured classical melody in the vein of Debussy's *Claire De Lune*. In songs like this, nostalgia — for Kanno — is given clear equation with notions of childhood, indeed, in interviews she has spoken of how she feels her childhood has thoroughly 'permeated' her music (Tomita 2014). The fantasy world conjured up here is one lost to time, but held, still, in our minds. In this manner, music, particular snatches of memorable melody such as those in *Green Bird*, serve as keys to unlock and re-access these memories, mnemonics for a forgotten age. Kanno's aptitude for all things 'childlike' would extend to her own personality during the production of *Cowboy Bebop*. As noted above, her working relationship with director Watanabe would function in a cyclical manner, informing the production of the show's content itself. This would take its most notable form in one of the key characters — androgynous preteen computer hacker 'Edward' — who was based on the 'antics and physicality' of Kanno herself (Newman 2016, 19). The role of a 'networked' anime industry — one project linked to the next via shared creative staff, would continue to pay dividends for Kanno. By this point, her working relationship with Studio Sunrise — who had produced both *Escaflowne* and *Cowboy Bebop* — was firmly established, and it is to them she would again return in her final composition of the decade, for 1999's *Turn A Gundam*.⁶⁴

Created to celebrate 20 years of Japan's iconic Gundam franchise, *Turn A Gundam* would see the sci-fi series' original creator Yoshiyuki Tomino return to directing duties, and as the final televised incarnation of *Gundam* to be produced using traditional, hand-painted cel animation (subsequent series would utilise digital paint software), *Turn A Gundam* mirrored much of the wider 'end of an era' feel that characterised the 1990s (Osmond 2020). With a plotline that attempts to rationalise and reflect on the past twenty years' of the franchise's history, tropes and arcane lore, the show often feels as if its scope is more cinematic in nature than televisual, and the lushness of Kanno's soundtrack for the series is reflective of this too, building on and maturing sonic tropes she had been developing over the past decade. Most indicative of this would be the track *Moon*, which plays on the delicacy and fantastical harp-like melodies of *Escaflowne* but pairs them with a childlike vocal and

⁶⁴ *Turn A Gundam* (*Tān Ē Gandamu*) aired 1999-2000, Fuji TV. Following a series of cataclysms, the Earth is reduced to the level of steam-driven technology, while on the moon, lunar colonies support a portion of humanity awaiting the day when the Earth is deemed suitable to return to. The series would retroactively attempt to include all prior installments in the *Mobile Suit Gundam* franchise within one consistent narrative timeline.

anthemic, almost martial, feel that speaks of a kind of lost innocence, fading away into the entropy of space. Like so much of her music, it is neither entirely happy or sad in tone, but instead simply expresses a broad, ambiguous longing. The trajectory of Kanno's creative input across *Escaflowne*, *Cowboy Bebop* and *Turn A Gundam* can be seen as part of a consistent aesthetic application to a 'retro-futurist' stream of science-fiction content (Guffy 2014, 254). These are worlds of fantastical technology, but always paired with and tied to memorialised remnants of something older, 'half-nostalgic, half-sentimental' in sensibility (Tembo 2019, 223). Through its blending of and flitting between genres, Kanno's music toward the end of the 1990s would itself become increasingly 'genre-less', existing in an ambiguous intermediary state that would combine elements of multiple styles, but ultimately belong to none of them. This singularity, perhaps, is what has ultimately led to her recognisability as a composer. Indeed, as time has passed, Kanno's music has become so synonymous with the audio-visual 'fabric' of 1990s anime, that she is on occasion even mistakenly attributed as providing the soundtrack to series — such as 1998's *Serial Experiments Lain* — that she in fact had no involvement in (Ellis 2006, 15). This mental 'mapping' of Kanno's sonic aesthetic, by both fans and scholars, to a decade that becomes increasingly distant and 'imagined' as it recedes into the past fashions her music into an object that is 'doubly' nostalgic in nature.

Kanno's own reassembling of her band, The Seatbelts, to re-perform the *Cowboy Bebop* theme in 2020 holds clear causal agency, chiefly in its reliance on the foreknowledge the listener brings to that performance. Just as the full resonance of shows like *Turn A Gundam* is only apparent to those cognisant of prior 'lore' from the franchise, we might imagine Kanno's output as a series of nested 'nows', always harking back to an earlier — and quite possibly illusory — 'first' listening. This is most obvious in the nursery rhyme-like melodies of songs like *Green Bird* and *Moon*, but can also be seen in the way material like *Dance of Curse* contains homages to pieces from the classical music canon. Kanno's music, it seems to our ears, is always on the cusp of sounding like something we think we already know — and it is in our mental 'searching' for this origin point that its nostalgic payload is best triggered. Svetlana Boym's philosophical approach to nostalgia, bridging the spaces of collective nostalgia that connect the nation and the self, is particularly useful here because it centres around nostalgia's 'reflective' aspects. Namely, how through the establishment of temporalised zones of space that exist outside of the habitualised everyday the emphasis is instead placed on movement, that it is perhaps in a never-ending 'search' that true meaning is found (Boym 2001, 22, 49). For the audiences of anime within the desolate economic climate of Japan in the 1990s, the fantastical 'frontier' worlds of the kind Kanno's music soundtracked were effective precisely because while they existed primarily as an 'escape'

from real-world concerns, the emotions they dealt in were fundamentally real. Offered as a paired set, anxiety and hope laid out the roadmap for a kind of perpetual longing, the prospect of a route to follow, a goal to aim for, but — most importantly — no guarantee of resolution or a happy ending. Instead, it was the seeking itself that would become a goal — of sorts — an emotional ‘teasing’ of something familiar-yet-distant that would offer the viewer/listener just enough to keep them on the path toward an end that may never arrive. Kanno’s own sonic trajectory as a composer would echo this path — tracing routes through an increasingly diverse spread of genres, yet remaining firmly identifiable as her own precisely because it remained reliant on a set toolkit of emotional resonances and the triggers used to elicit these.

In the next section, I will move on to examine how many of the sonic ‘triggers’ employed by Kanno in her compositional conjuring of nostalgia can be codified as part of a musical tradition of systemised tropes — in essence placing her music, for all that it often sounds fundamentally ‘un-Japanese’, as something that can be situated firmly within a Japanese musical ‘feel’, a layer to be found deeper than surface stylings and labels of genre such as ‘classical’ or ‘jazz’. Furthermore, in comparing and contrasting Kanno’s work with those of many of her contemporaries, we will ask to what degree her techniques of composition might form part of wider tendencies amongst anime music within the 1990s.

Part 2: Going beyond genre — The importance of musical ‘feel’

In discussing concepts of nostalgia in relationship to music in Japan, Christine Yano’s *Tears of longing: Nostalgia and the nation in Japanese popular song* remains a cornerstone text in its presentation of musical sentimentality as a fundamental component within the heart or soul of the Japanese (*nihonjin no kokoro*) (Yano 2003, 4). Yano’s study focuses on *enka*, a genre of music especially popular with older generations, and puts forward a combination of collectivity, practice, cliché and *kata* (forms) as core components in the construction of the music’s identity. Building on Yano’s theories of nostalgia and nationhood, and toward a more sophisticated understanding of various ‘modes’ of nostalgia, this section will look to explore how in anime music too, themes of longing resonated deeply within the kind of music being created in the 1990s, imprinting a kind of sonic ‘watermark’ that would allow listeners to find solace within a particular kind of aesthetic construct. By transferring Yano’s theories of a Japanese musical nostalgia from *enka* to that of anime music, what I seek to establish is a sense of musical ‘feel’ that ultimately transcends genre, and to situate, somewhere within the sound of the music itself, an aesthetic value driven by the emotional content it contains.

In Yano's characterisation of *enka*, this value is fundamentally contained within a temporal dimension: 'To the Japanese public, *enka* sounds timelessly old although it is still actively created and consumed. The erasure of passing time is in fact part of its attraction' (2003, 3). As I explore within this section, this sense of osmosis or free-flow between the old and new is a fundamental element to the 'feel' of musical nostalgia, namely that through the evocation of something old and familiar, the future and past are folded into an intermediary state in which, as Yano suggests, the passage of time seems to halt. It is in this quality that the resonance of Japan's 'Lost Decade' is most evident — the musical feel of stasis achieving parity with the sense that Japan itself, after decades of economic growth, was now also on permanent 'pause'. As Yano describes, the power of a music like *enka* — in speaking to what she terms a culturally constructed 'imaginary' — goes beyond a 'particular turn of melody or twist of phrase' but is to be found instead in a kind of communal sentiment. But who (or what) dictates the content and confines of this communality? As Yano puts it: 'If *enka* provides one version of an imagined Japan, who is doing the imagining and to what purpose? In other words, whose "Japan" is this?' (2003, 4-5). If we are to take *enka* as one generic manifestation of this imagined communality, then anime music stands as another. Shared between them is a similar chain of constructed sentiment, the sense that in each and every composition, certain aesthetic choices will imagine into being certain communalities as opposed to others.

It is here that we must turn our attention back to the musical creators within the equation of production and consumption. One of the reasons the 1990s stand out as such a fruitful field of study for anime music in Japan is that the composers of this era were increasingly following diverse routes into the industry. For those like Yōko Kanno, who created many of her earliest soundtracks for video game franchises, the kind of sonic 'world-building' necessitated by the interactive medium would lend itself well to the fantastical settings she would later soundtrack within anime. For others, like Susumu Hirasawa, an earlier career as a rock musician would lead to a dramatically experimental sonic palette within his anime music. This rapid broadening in the kinds of sound composers would utilise within soundtracks opens up important questions regarding what, functionally and generically, listeners might 'expect' from a soundtrack.

Whilst acknowledging that notions of genre remain important in discussing both anime and its musical accompaniments, I argue that it is in fact the ability for musical 'feel' to transcend arbitrary categorisations of genre that is a defining element to both Kanno's soundtracks as well as many of her contemporaries. In what Newman terms a kind of authorial tracing, 'by locating a text in relation to surrounding works sharing common collaborative creatives' we

piece together a web of complex interplay between ‘medium and mediators’ (Newman 2016, 18) in which shared aesthetic sympathies are bred into being. Thus, through close analysis of a number of key musical works from anime across the 1990s, this section looks to paint a particularly ‘Japanese’ portrait of nostalgia and how, whether presented within electronic dance music or classically orchestrated refrains, designed for older audiences or younger ones, it ‘feels’ part of a remarkably consistent whole. In turning from the close analysis of Yōko Kanno’s career offered in the first section of this chapter to other composers, a clear figure to begin our further discussion with is Joe Hisaishi. As we will go on to see, not only did Kanno and Hisaishi have occasion to work together on a soundtrack — Studio Ghibli’s *Porco Rosso* (1992)⁶⁵ — but in conceptualising a kind of ‘anime music canon’, of which composers of Kanno’s stature and renown would occupy the upper tiers (Jurkiewicz 2019, 4), the pinnacle would without a doubt be held by Hisaishi, famed globally for his long running work soundtracking Studio Ghibli’s films. A full history of Hisaishi’s career goes beyond the scope of this chapter, and has unsurprisingly, given his fame, been offered elsewhere (Rusli 2010, Roedder 2013). Rather, of particular relevance to my argument here is how — much like Kanno herself — Hisaishi’s work has invariably been characterised as ‘nostalgic’, that this, even, is its quintessential and foremost essence.

Indeed, it is telling that in *Joe Hisaishi’s Soundtrack for My Neighbor Totoro* (2020) — a book length study of the film’s soundtrack — the very first theme discussed is that of nostalgia. Here, Kunio Hara distils the pastoral, familial qualities of *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988)⁶⁶ as almost palliative in nature, that it ‘inspires a sense of comfort and warmth, joy and happiness, even on days I don’t otherwise feel too upbeat’. For Hara, Hisaishi’s soundtrack occupies a ‘special role’ within the film, namely, in its ability to ‘colour’ the way the audience views the movie (Hara 2020, 1). This process of emotional colouring lies at the core of the relationship between music and nostalgia in *My Neighbour Totoro*. Drawing on Marilyn Ivy’s work in the mid-1990s and its evocation of the tail end of 20th century Japan (1995, 10), Hara discusses how nostalgia functions as a form of longing to erase ‘temporal difference’ and that despite its often melancholic nature, it is fundamentally a ‘productive, guiding

⁶⁵ *Porco Rosso* (*Kurenai no Buta*) was originally conceived as a short in-flight film for Japan Airlines, based on a manga by director Hayao Miyazaki. It was eventually developed into a full-length feature effort, and tells the story of an Italian World War 1 fighter pilot who is transformed into a strange human-pig hybrid following a curse. This titular ‘Porco Rosso’ — or ‘red pig’ — resorts to a life of bounty hunting in the skies above the Adriatic Sea.

⁶⁶ *My Neighbour Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*) tells the story of two young sisters who move into an old house in Japan’s idyllic, rural countryside. As they explore the nearby forest, they encounter a succession of friendly woodland spirits. The film has become an emblematic work for Studio Ghibli, with its titular ‘Totoro’ character serving as a logo for the studio, as well as generating billions of dollars’ worth of merchandising sales.

emotion of the era' (Hara 2020, 4). As we have seen earlier with Kanno's music, the collapsing of the gap between old and new remains central in this erasure of temporal difference, and suggests that if we are to read this quality as symptomatic of the era it was created in, that this element may be present in the works of other Japanese composers operating at the same point in time. Thus, it is worth noting that, in Hisaishi's music too, Hara stresses that the nostalgic quality is to be found on a more abstract level than simply music that sounds 'old' — that there is a universality to it beyond individual stylistic choices.

As seen earlier with Kanno, Hisaishi's songs even seem to hold a degree of 'internal' nostalgia for their own creator — the composer would continually revisit the *My Neighbor Totoro* soundtrack over the years following its first release, updating the music to reflect contemporary recording technologies, as well as — perhaps — his own increasing status as a composer and the assets made available to him by the studio and its collaborative funders. Thus, the original version of the film's iconic track *Path of the Wind*, which uses synthesisers for its lead melody, would invariably become fully orchestrated in live performances of the song. In 2020, the release of Hisaishi's compilation album *Dream Songs* on specialist classical label Decca would be accompanied by significant promotion on his English-language YouTube channel, including amongst many other re-recordings of classic Hisaishi material, a version of *Path of the Wind* re-branded as *The Wind Forest* in which the song is stripped back to just barebones piano. This 'international' visage of Hisaishi as concert pianist and composer *par excellence* shows how the nostalgia attached to an iconic song like *Path of the Wind* can in many ways forge its own kind of musical 'path' through history, acting as a powerful and 'upgradeable' vehicle by which to carry the persona of its creator in its wake.

Released in 1988, *My Neighbour Totoro* would pre-empt an onrush of nostalgia-infused soundscapes that swept across the anime industry in the subsequent decade. Alistair Swale (2015), for example, devotes an entire article to critically engaging with the themes of nostalgia and memory in Studio Ghibli's work as a whole, and works towards a conceptualization of the experience as both a 'mood' and a kind of 'aesthetics of imagination'. For Swale, the nostalgia evident in Studio Ghibli's films is an extension of the 'elegiac' impulse identified by Susan Napier as one of the core modes of anime as a medium. Indeed, Napier keenly identifies the constant tension nostalgia presents in films such as *Princess Mononoke* as a battle between the 'exotic' and the 'familiar', between 'subversion' and 'defamiliarisation' (Napier 2005, 177, 279, cited in Swale 2015, 416). In the case of *Totoro*, Swale identifies the nostalgic drive most evidently in the landscape and

architecture of the film, its depiction of a sweetly innocent rural idyll is powerful precisely because of the ‘scrupulous attention’ by which it is recreated on screen (Swale 2015, 416). It is then, in the picking out of ‘detail’, whether via visual or auditory means, that serves as a kind of mnemonic aid by which the nostalgic content of the filmic text is best brought out. In this sense, we can perhaps even see *Totoro* as the model, or exemplar, by which others would follow. The template set by Studio Ghibli would find its literal successor in the careers of composers like Kanno, who herself would serve as arranger on the ending theme *Once in a While, Talk of the Old Days* for the studio’s *Porco Rosso* (1992) — a title that quite literally revels in an overt, indulgent nostalgia as it lays out a moving serenade of changing times. The lyrics — written and sung by Tokiko Kato, who would also provide voice acting duties for the role of Madame Gina in the film — speak of a restless searching for an unseeable future, hopes and beliefs blown on by the ‘hot winds’ of a ‘tempestuous age’. Through this all, treasured photographs and memories, familiar cafes and cups of coffee, friends whose whereabouts are no longer known. Kanno’s simple arrangement positions the track as a languid piano ballad, as one might hear in one of those very same cafes. As the track progresses, warm violin strings swell to eclipse the vocals, tracing out the path of the song’s emotional payload.

As a piece of clear, calculated ‘nostalgia as package’ and a perfect encapsulation of the kind of musical evocation of ‘collective memory’ discussed by Yano (2003, 6), the song’s themes are echoed across the rest of the *Porco Rosso* soundtrack, most notably in the Joe Hisaishi compositions *The Wind of Time*, *The Bygone Days*, *A Sepia-Coloured Picture*, *In Search of the Distant Era* and *At the End of Summer*. The melancholic, openly nostalgic quality of these titles can be read in tandem with the film’s feel as perhaps the most ‘realist’ of Ghibli’s output. In films like *Porco Rosso*, ‘the representations of European cities and settings became a nostalgic attempt to recapture Miyazaki’s own memories of Europe’ (Denison 2020, 70-72). This would even extend to auditory manifestations, with Studio Ghibli’s sound team sent to record the background noises of these urban locales. Whether it be the ‘fantasy’ of the bulk of Ghibli’s movies, or the more comparative ‘realism’ of *Porco Rosso*, the crucial measure is that this nostalgia is always ‘purposeful’ — not only about what is lost in the transition from childhood to adulthood, but also what might be gained from the foreshadowing that adulthood offers by way of hindsight. When *Once in a While, Talk of the Old Days* sings of a ‘tempestuous age’, it speaks not only of the past, but of the now, offering nostalgia as a comforting slice of solace to those listeners whose social lives were becoming increasingly ‘diffuse, ambiguous, and fragmented’ (Yano 2003, 9). The generation living through the 1990s were in effect becoming exiles of their own childhood, unable to return to a past space that no longer existed, except in the form of memory.

For Miyazaki, the political context of *Porco Rosso* would achieve a distinct resonance with current affairs, the film's reflections on World War 1 era aviation entangling with the contemporary conflicts that broke out in locations such as Dubrovnik during the film's production (Jolin 2009, 119). For others, the film's apparent 'realism' is purely superficial, finely detailed only to the extent that it might better serve the film's fantasies, offering a painterly view of Europe that 'is tamed, rendered as a charming site of pleasurable consumption, made distant and viewed through a tourist gaze' (Wood 2009, 112). Here, the purposeful nostalgia is re-envisioned as part of a long Japanese tradition of *wakon yōsai* (Japanese spirit, Western learning) whereby Japanese artists would fashion Europe as a spectacular, dream-like realm, yet holding it at arms' length in order to preserve a definite sense of Japanese identity. For Lamarre, the kind of nostalgia present in Miyazaki's movies is powerful precisely because of this blended nature, mixing with eclecticism 'pastoral, medieval, and feudal economies or techno-cultures' as part of a 'quasi-deconstructive gesture' that yields 'moments of freedom within ordering, rather than offering a new order' (Lamarre 2009, 96). The notion of deconstruction is one I will return to later in this chapter, but of particular relevance to our argument here is the resistance, hinted at by Lamarre, to any kind of 'new order'. Instead, while the sheer freedom of the creative mixing evidenced within Miyazaki's films offers an illusory 'newness', what this masks is that the components making up the assemblage are in fact largely old.

While this would at first glance suggest a kind of stasis, unchanging and unmoving, I suggest that Denison's earlier comments offer one means of solving this dichotomy between the old and the new. In Miyazaki's films, nostalgia — she argues — is always purposeful, and thus, if they appear to resonate with 'old' themes, it is only because they are imbued with a purpose to offer this as a lesson to those that follow. The soundtrack for *Porco Rosso* is one manifestation of this, with the instructional quality of *Once in a While, Talk of the Old Days* offering communication as a clear channel between the past and future, a means of re-accessing and remembering what now belongs to years long gone by. The past, therefore, remains 'purposeful', even as it moves to slot in behind the present within the broader onward march of time. As Denison concludes in her reading of nostalgia in Ghibli's movies, it is the very capacity of the films to embed the most pressing of global issues within worlds of anime that ensures the status of their 'European motifs not just as nostalgic or geographic palimpsests but as ways for [Miyazaki] to engage children in wider global debates' (Denison 2020, 72). In this manner, we might envision the nostalgia of these films as a kind of intergenerational 'baton-pass', serving a particular causal function in their ability to transpose — through the act of world-building — 'issues' into artform. The nostalgic quality of Ghibli's

movies and their music might — like anime itself — be ‘Japanese’ by virtue of their genesis, but this crucially does not presuppose them from speaking with a global voice.

The themes that Hisaishi would develop within his compositions for Studio Ghibli would ultimately extend beyond the anime industry. In his soundtrack for the Takeshi Kitano-directed *Kikujirō* (1999),⁶⁷ he would draw again on the nostalgic quality of *Summer* in a track of the same name. In what is one of Hisaishi’s tracks most openly influenced by the work of the American school of musical Minimalism made famous by composers such as Steve Reich, the percussive blend of piano and synthesisers creates a number of interlocking rhythms that, in their repetitive quality, achieve a kind of powerful interior familiarity. At any given time within the track, we know exactly how the music ‘should’ sound, because we have, in essence, already heard a variation on it earlier on in the same track. This sense of self-contained repetition would then recycle, in turn, back into Hisaishi’s work for anime, recurring two years later in the track *One Summer’s Day*, composed for the soundtrack to *Spirited Away* (2001).

The potential pathways to ‘conjuring’ nostalgia out of the musical aether are as countless as there are potential compositions themselves. Therefore, we must acknowledge that, quite in spite of their fame, Kanno and Hisaishi are not wholly representative of anime music, or indeed Japanese music, in the 1990s. Rather, by focusing on them, I seek to build on an ‘indicative’ shift toward a ‘greater interest in both Asian popular music and concert music’ (Ogino and McCorkle 2019, 14) within English language scholarship that has, in the last few years, seen these two individuals in particular move closer toward a perceived end goal of admission into a canon of ‘greater interest’ which would see Asian composers discussed on a par with their ‘Western’ counterparts (Bull 2018). In my analysis of Kanno and Hisaishi, I have sought to illustrate a sense of musical feeling — what Shinzo Ogino and Brooke McCorkle term an identifiable ‘style’ or characterisable ‘stylistic counterpoint’ (2019, 49) — held in common between them, as Japanese composers. Thus, in now broadening out my discussion of anime music in the 1990s to their contemporaries, I seek precisely to ‘indicate’ rather than represent, highlighting the trends in shared musical sympathies, despite the surface level differences.

⁶⁷ *Kikujirō*, also known as *Kikujirō no Natsu* (lit. Kikujirō’s Summer) tells the story of a young boy searching for his mother during the summer holidays. The film plays out as a series of entries in his diary. Directed by Takeshi Kitano, best known in Japan for his career as a comedian and TV personality, the release of *Kikujirō* would follow his earlier 1998 effort *Hana-bi*, for which Kitano had been awarded a Golden Lion at the 54th Venice International Film Festival, and continue to secure his reputation as an internationally acclaimed filmmaker.

For the generation of Japanese compositional and musical talent born in the 1950s and 1960s, I suggest that a kind of shared ‘trajectory’ of lived experience carried them through the nation’s own trajectory of boom years. The incidence of economic malaise that heralded the 1990s would hit as a kind of universal ‘event’ in time, suddenly punctuating this shared trajectory. This would ultimately come to stand as a backdrop that had to — in some way — be rationalised as aesthetic experience. In search of further examples by which to better elucidate this sense of musical feel, I therefore suggest that the feelings present in the music of Yōko Kanno are perhaps very much there in the work of some of her contemporaries too.

To this end, a brief look at the work of Kenji Kawai makes a useful point of comparison. Famed for his compositional work on live action Japanese horror films such as *The Ring* (1998) and *Dark Water* (2002), it is his soundtrack for 1995’s *Ghost in the Shell* that sealed the composer’s reputation with international audiences. In the film’s iconic opening sequence, which sees the show’s cyborg heroine ‘born’ through an assemblage of bio-mechanical parts, Kawai’s music — much like Kanno’s soundtrack for the *Nobunaga’s Ambition* franchise — blends choral chants utilising the classical form of the Japanese language with a sense of clinically percussive electronic minimalism. We might consider this usage a kind of ‘self-orientalism’, of the kind Yano sees as a value component of music as a kind of ‘technology of memory’, in which as an active shaper of memory as opposed to merely a vessel, its role is by nature, fluid (2003, 9, 17). The opening theme, in this instance, is quite literally a kind of ‘ghost in the shell’ — even more so because its origins are, in fact, deceptively mixed, the melody being a symbiotic blend of traditional Japanese notes and Bulgarian harmonies (Penicka-Smith 2010, 261-274). Kawai’s soundtrack has ultimately remained such an iconic element of the film’s aesthetic package that when the movie was re-made as a Hollywood live action effort starring Scarlett Johansen in [2017], a remix of Kawai’s music by American DJ/producer Steve Aoki entitled *Utaï IV: Awakening* was included in an accompanying ‘Inspired by the Motion Picture’ album release, despite the film itself being scored by British composers Clint Mansell and Lorne Balfe. Likewise, Yōko Kanno herself — working on the opening theme for spin-off television series *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (2002-2005) — would also reference choral elements in a manner similar to Kawai, pairing them to a similarly percussive backbeat, albeit updating it with a faster pace and more electronic elements. In this manner, we might read the history of the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise as defined by its sonic identity — a kind of ‘auditory branding’ — as much as it is by its moniker itself.

Identifiable strands of instrumentation or sonic texture, of the kind signified in the choral elements analysed above, stand as one means by which to trace lineages of how a certain

'sound' may come to occupy an imagined space or time larger than their original instance. The link between these sonic spaces or instances, however, retains a kind of creative imprint — and drawing further on the theme of choral elements, as seen in both the work of Kanno and Kawai, we might also turn — with perhaps the most striking of results — to another brief case study in unexpected routes into composition. Here we would suggest that just as Kanno's beginnings in video game music led to a diversified palette of compositional techniques and styles in her anime compositions, other kinds of inter-industry movement would also serve to broaden the possible range of manifestations a given 'anime soundtrack' might take in the 1990s. Origins within the independent and alternative rock music scenes would provide one tangible focus for this — in the early 1970s, Tokyo-born musician Susumu Hirasawa would form the prog-rock band Mandrake, blending elements of heavy metal and krautrock in their music. The mix would prove fundamentally uncommercial however, and it was only on re-forming and re-branding the band as P-Model in 1979 that the outfit would meet with success as they entertained a more electronic edge to their music. Hirasawa would struggle with both his newfound fame and the necessity of staying within a single musical genre however, and would ultimately launch a solo career toward the tail end of the 1980s. Finally unrestrained musically, Hirasawa would in 1997 soundtrack the darkly violent medieval-style fantasy series *Berserk*⁶⁸, a work that — in conjunction with his compositions for the films of Satoshi Kon — he is still best remembered for internationally to this day.

In stark contrast to the classical refrains of Yōko Kanno's soundtrack for *Escaflowne*, for example, Hirasawa's work for *Berserk* eschews traditional compositional modes and instead draws on his background of alternative rock and electronica. Openly recycling the track *Take the Wheel* from his fourth solo album *Aurora*, the opening theme for *Berserk* offers this dynamic cocktail of influences up as a powerful, and at times shocking statement of intent. Against a backdrop of burbling electronics and harsh, militaristic percussion, a synthesiser melody halfway between a horn and a bagpipe rings out, before ushering in a swooping, almost-discordant vocal line from Hirasawa himself. When the nonsensical chorus line finally arrives (a single, repeated yelp of 'Hai Yai Forces') it is like a battle cry, ushering on the massed armies of armoured warriors that make up the show's key players. Musically speaking, *Forces* plays as an instrument of clear, blunt intent, its exotic compositional soundscape at odds with the fundamental catchiness of the rallying call its chorus offers.

⁶⁸ *Berserk* (*Beruseruku*) aired 1997-1998, Nippon TV. Based on a manga series by Kentaro Miura, which has been running from 1989 through to the present day. The series follows the story of lone mercenary Guts and his continuing struggles against both cruel demon forces and his eternal rival, Griffith.

The *Berserk* soundtrack — taken as a whole — is not without its subtler moments, however. *Guts*, the title leitmotif for the show's lead character, in opposition to the frenetic pace of *Forces*, is almost torturously slow, reverb heavy piano chords backing strange, disembodied vocal cries — the effect is as if listening to music from deep underwater. As the song progresses, the vocals gradually rise to the fore, coalescing into a clear melody. Without a single intelligible syllable being sung, the song somehow speaks to a deep-rooted sense of loss and mourning, a sadness driven right to the very core of a person's emotional being.

Hirasawa's music feels inescapably tied to the 1990s because of the way its production qualities draw attention to its own artificiality — at times feeling less like soundtracks, and more like experiments *in* the use of sound, multiple audio tracks of vocals, percussion and keyboards colliding together in a DIY aesthetic that suggests an electronic equivalent to movements like the rough-and-ready feel of Seattle grunge. At other times, its use of overtly synthesised instrumentation and pounding beats — which echo the kinds of relentless trance music popular in nightclubs during that period — constantly call up questions of technological anxiety, to ask, even, if electronic music might still speak to a human soul. Hirasawa's is a 'digitised' music — echoing what Lamarre sees as a trend toward a 'cyber imagination' in the 1990s (2018, 318) — existing *because* of technology, something which his live shows make explicit. When performing, Hirasawa deliberately employs bizarrely experimental instruments such as the laser harp to offer a vivid, on-stage visual counterpart to the sonic exoticism of his music. This eclecticism and striving towards electronic newness might initially seem like a rejection of nostalgic values, but as highlighted in the comments from Lamarre earlier, it is precisely within the kinds of 'techno-cultures' represented by Hirasawa's compositional methods that we can find modes of composition that — as in the sharp distinction in feel between Hirasawa's tracks *Forces* and *Guts* — holds nostalgia at a distance whilst simultaneously embracing it. The tendency to equate nostalgia purely with melancholia, whimsy or even 'prettiness' is an easy one to make, and Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell (2017, 613) are notable in observing within their study of the typologies of nostalgia that it is important to envision its affective qualities as not merely orientated toward the past, but also holding the capacity to shape both present and future. Therefore, I would be remiss in not suggesting that nostalgia can also incorporate other forms of manifestation, namely those of deconstruction, irony, homage or parody.

As the 1990s progressed, the number of shows — such as *Berserk* — that could be seen as 'deconstructions' of their respective genres boomed. None would be more emblematic of this trend than *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996), which drew heavily on the tropes of the mecha or 'giant robot' genre which had been a stalwart of science-fiction anime since the

1960s, but subverted them in often dark, psychologically challenging ways that represented a kind of desire — on behalf of the shows' creators — to 'break' the rules or tropes which they had grown up observing. For Clements, *Evangelion* and the 'newness' hinted at in the 'Neon Genesis' of the show's title were emblematic of the era of 'fans turned professionals' ushered in by the 1990s, and that the show's deconstruction of the mecha genre was in every way it acting as a 'successor or response to prior series such as *Mobile Suit Gundam* (Clements 2013, 172). Writing of the show, Mariana Ortega sees the nature of 'deconstruction' as defined by a proclivity for 'self-referentiality, parody, pastiche, metalepsis', but also — most crucially — a requirement of multiple possible readings or interpretations for the viewer (Ortega 2007, 217). For audiences for whom the clear, straight pathway followed by earlier generations no longer existed, the multiplicities offered by these anime made for beguiling parallels with the realities of their own lives. Indeed, much of the creative tension within *Evangelion* around following the 'correct' path can be observed, in miniature, within the show's opening theme sequence. From the very beginning, director Hideaki Anno had originally wanted to use a piece of classical music for the show's opening theme, (Borodin's *Polovetsian Dances*) but due to concerns that this might confuse the viewership, a decision was ultimately made to opt for a more upbeat pop song instead (Refrain of *Evangelion* OST Booklet, 2003). This would openly position *Evangelion* alongside other contemporary mecha series, such as *New Mobile Report Gundam Wing* (1995-1996), in its utilisation of a synthesiser-heavy tie-in theme. In this respect, *Evangelion* was following a clear lineage — but while the music would see it attempting to 'fit the mold', the corresponding visuals would be another matter entirely.

The frenetic, fast-paced cuts of the *Evangelion* opening theme — edited in time to the music's beat — offers a chaotic, relentless assault on the eyes. Chris Bolton sees this kind of frenetic, 'ceaseless rotation of vivid images' as an example of the type of postmodernist 'flow of language and imagery' heralded by Fredric Jameson, fundamentally fracturing and breaking down the nature of a causal, 'signifying chain' and instead offering only 'a series of pure and unrelated presents in time' that stand in isolation as part of an 'instantaneous present' (Jameson 1991, 27, cited in Bolton 2014, 299). Rather than be bound to the familiarity and comfort offered by nostalgia, these new moments in time push the viewer/listener toward unshackled freedom. For Bolton however, the escapism of the post-modernist impulse is fundamentally deceptive, offering a 'sense of freedom or lightness— exhilarating but disturbingly empty' (2014, 299). In the wave of science-fiction anime that would follow in the wake of *Akira* (1988), like the stasis of the Lost Decade itself, history would in effect 'end', 'intermixed in a way that collapses past, present, and future' (2014, 299). The overtly jubilant feel of the *Evangelion* theme, and its very nature as a flamboyant

pop song backing scenes of horrific violence and sleek sci-fi machinations, teases the listener with false meaning that ultimately, is simply not present. This hollowness is reflective of the way the show's title and thematic elements — which many have sought to analyse from a perspective of finding Christian symbolism and resonance — are also, in the end, 'empty' images. This question of 'image' is summed up neatly by Yōko Kanno, who notes: 'Japanese don't believe in one God, but in gods everywhere in plants and animals. That's right. In Japan, Christianity has a wonderful image. People enjoy the image of Christ and Christianity in picture books, but not as a religion' (Drazen 2017, 37). While we must acknowledge the generalising nature of Kanno's comments, they are useful in their symbolism of the breakdown of Jameson's 'signifying chain', images for which the only meaning is a picture book-like 'enjoyment' divorced from their original significance. By this, I mean that the kind of 'image-only' model of Christianity observed by Kanno is a prime example of significance generated and enjoyed in and of itself — a fantastical realm of free-play in which components of visual (or auditory) meaning can be re-configured in ways that fly in the face of established rulesets and archetypes. In this manner, the atmosphere of sheer disorientation offered by *Evangelion*, released precisely halfway through the 1990s, comes as a kind of cry of frustration at the 'emptiness' of the Lost Decades, a rallying call to 'break' with the past and deconstruct it to its barest bones.

It might be tempting to read this as the taking of one of two paths in the road offered by the stasis of the Lost Decade — one path a reaction against all that has come before, and the other a return to (perhaps even a retreat into) the apparent safety offered by indulging in an aggrandised, excess-laden re-manifestation of that very same past. If *Evangelion* can be seen as taking the first of these two paths in its disorientated 'empty' images, then — two years on — 1997's *Gao Gai Gar*⁶⁹ could be seen as the mecha genre's experiment in taking the latter path. Where *Evangelion* would toy with nostalgia in its rejection of familiarity, *Gao Gai Gar* would embrace it with loving arms, giving audiences exactly what they had always wanted all along. The eighth and final instalment in Japanese toy company Takara's *Yūsha* (Brave) franchise (a collaboration with the production studio Sunrise, also responsible for the *Gundam* franchise), *Gao Gai Gar* was the culmination to a concerted effort by the brand across the decade to re-invigorate sales in transforming robot toys, which — in parallel with the bursting of Japan's economic bubble — had been flagging since the end of the 1980s as the initial popularity of the original *Transformers* (original series 1984-1987) franchise tailed

⁶⁹ *The King of Braves Gao Gai Gar (Yūsha Ō Gaogaigā)* aired 1997-1998, Nagoya TV. As part of the wider *Yūsha* (Brave) franchise, the series features giant, transformable robots, blending together tropes from Japan's popular 'mecha' and 'super sentai' genres as humanity does battle against parasitic alien life forms.

off. This ‘rehabilitation’ of anime’s robot-centric mecha genre and its potential as a money-spinning ‘advert’ for accompanying toy lines would not be without its own challenges, however. Chief among these would be the air of distrust and controversy surrounding the mecha genre in the late 1990s as a result of *Evangelion*’s success and its engagement with often shockingly adult themes, sexual imagery and morally grey characters. In response, *Gao Gai Gar*’s creators ensured that there would be no ‘betrayals’ by characters within their series, and adhered closely to the show’s original conception as a children’s show.

The series’ opening sequence acts as a perfect, one-and-a-half-minute-long encapsulation of many of the tropes *Gao Gai Gar* aims to act as a nostalgia-laden homage of. The song itself harks back to the jubilant, marching-band like quality of the golden era of anime theme music from the 1970s (such as *Mazinger Z* [1972-1974] or the very first *Mobile Suit Gundam* series [1979-1980]) and is full of imperative calls to action that compel the viewer to ‘Rise!’ and ‘Run!’. In the accompanying opening visuals, we see the robots ‘combining’ together in toyetic,⁷⁰ obsessively observed detail, sockets twisting and plugging into each-other as the lyrics continuously and alliteratively yell out the show’s name — making literal the song’s status as ‘theme’ tune. The robot’s ‘special attacks’ become part of the song too, roared out at the top of the singer’s voice: ‘DIVIDING DRIVER!’ / ‘GOLDION HAMMER!’ The song is grandiose in the extreme, almost parodically so — its self-referential interactivity openly showcased for all to see. It is not simply a ‘children’s show’, but has been consciously and deliberately designed, by adults, to ‘sound’ like one — reflecting and internalising memories of their own childhoods.

At one point, we see one of *Gao Gai Gar*’s heroes running at top speed, keeping pace with a 500 Series *shinkansen* bullet-train (newly launched in the year 1997, when the show first aired), which is shown against a backdrop of Mt Fuji soaring into the sky. This aping of a classic, quintessentially ‘Japanese’ image of modernity and the ‘old-school’ feel of the opening theme is in many ways an open harking back to the optimism of the 1960s when both the original *shinkansen* and the giant robot *super sentai* (superhero team / squadron) shows *Gao Gai Gar* apes were first popularised. It is highly telling that in Jameson’s account of the breakdown of the ‘signifying chain’ within postmodernism, he highlights the antidote as a tendency to want to ‘make things seem as they usually were’ (Jameson 1991, 72). For Yano, this kind of ‘turn’ to tradition is a key marker of how generational shifts in media creation and consumption can be linked to a kind of taste for images (and sounds) of

⁷⁰ The term ‘toyetic’ – meaning possessed of a particular suitability for conversion into marketable toys – is attributed to toy development executive Bernard Loomis, who acquired a lucrative licence for the characters of the *Star Wars* franchise (Salmans 1985).

nationhood, activated on reaching middle-age (Yano 2003, 6). Indeed, the existence of shows like *Gao Gai Gar* in the 1990s illustrates an important point regarding how the decade came to be a kind of crucial nexus between two sets of equally important anime audiences, alluded to earlier in Clements' comment of 'fans turned professionals'. Firstly, there were those who had been following anime since its 'origins' in the 1960s, when the kinds of 'super robot' shows of which *Gao Gai Gar* was such an open homage of first aired. Now aged in their 30s and 40s, it was precisely these viewers for who the nostalgia quotient would be strongest (in time, as they grew older, many of this generation would come to be known as 'silver *otaku*'). And yet, there was also the audience for who — as a children's show — *Gao Gai Gar* was ostensibly primarily aimed, the sons and daughters of these 'first' anime fans, for who the show would come to represent their own generation. For these children, the 're-cycling' of tropes was in fact offering them their own set of 'firsts', novel and new to them, but informed by the experiences and memories of the generation who came before them (and were now the creative staff making the kinds of show they viewed, themselves, as children).

Opening themes like those for *Evangelion* and *Gao Gai Gar* feel in stark contrast to the more melancholic nostalgia offered by the soundtracks of Kanno, Hisaishi and Hirasawa. As out-and-out pop songs, their nostalgia is not for what has been lost, but for what might be re-built from the past. By openly aping the themes and genre cliches of their creators' youths, much like Yano's theory of *enka*, they instead create a kind of non-space — a timelessness that exists apart from reality, an eternally relevant 'now'. In this manner, it is easy to understand how *Evangelion*'s opening theme *A Cruel Angel's Thesis*⁷¹ remains one of the Top 5 most-performed tracks at karaoke in Japan to this day (Loo 2018). These are not merely soundtracks to sink into and passively absorb, but songs that are made to be sung, selling a nostalgia that is not simply felt, but performed. For Yano, drawing on the theories of Benedict Anderson, the 'active' nature of this musical nostalgia is fundamental in the 'styling' of Japan's imagined sense of 'nation as community'. From musical world-building to literal 'nation-making' (Yano 2003, 19), the nostalgic content of anime music in the 1990s, as well as the nostalgia felt now for that period, coalesce together into a singular imagined space of its own. Just as nostalgia itself thrives through familiarity, it is the continual 'refreshing' of memory that performative consumption of music allows that is fundamental in fixing and making concrete the collectively 'imagined' Japan of which the music styles itself as a part. As Jill Bradbury (2012, 341) puts it: 'nostalgia is not only a longing for the way things were, but also a longing for futures that never came, or for horizons of possibilities that seem to

⁷¹ In 2011, *A Cruel Angel's Thesis* (*Zankoku na tenshi no tēze*) was given the first-place award in JASRAC's (The Japanese Society for Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers) annual ceremony for music royalties, testament to the long-running staying power of the song's popularity.

have been foreclosed by the unfolding of events'. Therefore, we might envision the creation and consumption of music as a kind of collective longing, a bringing into being of a collective possibility — the medium of music instrumental in facilitating the shared nature of this act.

Reading nostalgia as something fundamentally performative in nature — or as Boym would characterise it, as a kind of narrative in which qualities such as irony and inconclusivity are precisely what allow for its open-ended flexibility (Boym 2001, 61) — goes a long way toward explaining how it can act as a dynamic, fluid link in the causal chain of value and meaning imbued in sonic material. The assembling and piecing together of older meanings into new forms, as seen in the *Gao Gai Gar* opening theme, or the soundtracks of Yoko Kanno, in their various ways highlight how the postmodernity of the Jamesonian 'collage' technique (Tembo 2019, 223) does not have to be inherently disorientating, but rather, it is in the act — the performance — of assemblage itself that the significance is determined. From the same raw materials, one assemblage may hold meaning, another assemblage, non-meaning; with the 'multiplicity of the bodies at the heart of assemblage' (Legg 2011, 129). In this way, songs like *A Cruel Angel's Thesis*, which may not have felt especially nostalgic to Japanese audiences on first hearing in 1995, in hindsight, come to represent immense nostalgia when heard and sung some twenty-five years later. Through performativity, and the repetition of decades' worth of accumulated karaoke attempts, they 'take on' a nostalgic quality, forming part of the 'collage' of history in their own right.

Crucially, the 'binding' nature of music and its ability to reach beyond the domestic media setting of the home would be vital in feeding into a national consciousness, precisely at a time when anxieties were rife that 'shocking' shows like *Evangelion* and the trends of media segmentation and diversification they represented would destroy the traditional model of familial viewing (Lamarre 2018, 224). Thus, in my attempt to ask what value music and the role of composers might hold in relation to anime from the 1990s, my answer would be that for every hint that anime output in the 1990s seemed to signal a trend toward a postmodernist breakdown in causally linked 'significance', music served as an anchor to bind it back toward older trends, tropes and tendencies. If an anime's visual content can be seen as the pieces of a vast puzzle that join together to form a complete picture, the musical component can be seen as the joins between those pieces — Subsumed within the whole, but a fundamental part of the underlying fabric that links the work together. This dynamic can be read in tandem with James Lastra's useful analysis of the causal relationship between the 'original' sound and its potential multiple recordings or instances of hearing, in which this multiplicity gives rise to a state in which the theoretical original is causally significant, but no longer necessarily privileged in status as unique (Lastra 1992, 70). It is this, perhaps, that is

hinted at in the suggestion that nostalgia exists 'beyond' the simple exchange value of shows like *Cowboy Bebop*, able to exist apart from the basic act of consumption, but leaving the viewer (and listener) with an aftertaste of memory that allows them to 'stream the past on demand' (Tembo 2019, 228) in a manner that would ultimately become embodied in the advent of digital streaming services such as Netflix. For composers like Kanno, dipping into the past 'on demand' to resurface memories of their youth in contemporary compositions, this would see their work becoming in many ways 'archival' in nature (Tembo 2019, 221, 227).

To this end, I would suggest that when Clements talks of the anime industry in 1990s Japan as a period of 'domestic market saturation', he captures an essence of how — through sheer volume of output — the wealth of viewing opportunities available to Japanese consumers meant the nature of viewing itself would also become increasingly 'archival'. The sheer volume of output would also contribute to what Yano terms 'music overheard' (2003, 7) — the saturation of the media (by which the 'background', subsidiary nature of soundtracks inherently lends itself to) building a national consensus of musical sentiment known-in-common, even amongst those that weren't explicit fans or active listeners of it. As discussed above, the circularity of the anime industry — in which every twenty to thirty years would represent a generational shift in which the consumers of the previous generation would become the producers of the next — would entail exactly this kind of sentiment-driven archival 'mining', drawing on the experiences of youth in an effort to emulate past successes for those that follow. It is this cyclicity, I argue, that arrived at a crucial cross-generational shift in the 1990s, offering an undiluted 'stream' of nostalgia. If the anime industry in the 1990s felt archival in nature, it was precisely because it was drawing from its own history and memories of itself, seeking often to address two generations with one consistent message of nostalgia-laden familiarity.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have aimed to offer an illustrative picture of how many of the soundscapes utilised within anime in the 1990s looked to nostalgia to deliver a concerted and specific delivery of musical 'feel', an emotional resonance in keeping with the broader ambience and sensibilities of the time.

Across Yōko Kanno's career during that decade, we saw how a transition from the sphere of video-game music to that of anime opened up new avenues of sonic world-building, blending

diverse genres and influences — both Japanese and otherwise in origin — toward a frequent aesthetic of ‘retro-futurism’. Viewing various examples of her compositional output through this lens, I have been able to build up an auditory identity for her work that is fundamentally defined by its embrace of incorporating the old and the familiar into the new. From the unsettling interpolation of *Madame Butterfly* within a sci-fi setting in *Magnetic Rose*, to ‘frontier’ narratives like *Cowboy Bebop* and its jazz-meets-Space Western premise, Kanno’s music would re-define expectations of what an anime soundtrack sounds like. In spite of this apparent surface level variety, however, I have sought to detail how the component tropes of Kanno’s soundtracks — and those of the shows she worked on — in fact held much in common, and that it is this consistency in ‘feel’ that lends it such musical sympathy with the ‘end of an era’ feel that characterised the 1990s.

For composers like Kanno, Hisaishi, Kawai and Hirasawa, the evocation of nostalgia through the elicitation of familiar sonic tropes offers the means to construct an often illusory, ‘imagined’ portrait of Japan — one caught between the past and future in a continual ‘now’. In their music, we find freedom in the creative possibilities this un-real manifestation of reality offers — negotiating fears of the unknown by guiding listeners through purposeful ‘packages’ of musical emotion that sought to smother this fear in the safe, reassuring comfort of the ‘known’. In parallel, other series — such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* — sought to actively reject and remake the past in their own image, deconstructing the familiar in favour of abstract shock-value characterised by a breakdown in the ‘signifying chain’ of inferred meaning. Ultimately, however, and perhaps somewhat ironically, shows like *Evangelion* would in time form part of the nostalgic landscape of the 1990s in their own right — spurred on by the adoption of their music as part of performative interactions such as karaoke, as well as by subsequently open homages of the genres they riffed on, as showcased in *Gao Gai Gar*. By these means, the tropes they engaged with would become rehabilitated as part of the same nexus and new paradigm of content creation that Yōko Kanno’s music engaged with in *Macross Plus* earlier in the decade, whilst also enacting exactly the kind of selectivity that characterised ‘selective nostalgia’ (Boym 2001, 326) in which disassembled memories and imaginary spaces are pieced back together again in a manner which allows illusory replications of the past to co-exist within the present.

In bringing together these various narratives, I would conclude that it is precisely this active quality of nostalgia — its ability to shape itself to the needs and aesthetic sensibilities of its creators and consumers — that lends both it and music such value. The lived ‘world’ of 1990s Japan — the ‘Lost Decade’ of economic malaise — offered one narrative, chased on by digital anxieties and the longing for a sense of security that quite possibly no longer

existed. And yet, through the 'medium and mediators' represented by the anime industry and creatives involved within it, audiences were offered tantalising alternatives, narratives that — while often fondly acknowledging what came before — also held clear purpose in their desire to navigate new pathways, both visually and sonically. Part of the joy of nostalgia is that, by its very nature, it offers something forever just out of reach — the journey, in essence, becomes the destination. Looking back becomes an act of constant remembrance, a way of 'feeling out' and not only re-accessing memories, but putting them to use, right here, in the present day.

Chapter 4: Music for a new millennium: Form, format and formula in the music of Yuki Kajiura

Introduction

As the 1990s gave way to the 2000s, Japan's pop cultural output was moving toward its apotheosis, with the manga magazine *Shōnen Jump*⁷² having reached an all-time high weekly circulation figure of 6.5 million copies (Misaka 2004, 23-30), and Studio Ghibli's acclaimed animation *Princess Mononoke* becoming the country's highest grossing film ever (Napier 2001, 176). As Japan greeted the dawn of a new millennium, consumers were faced with a bewildering variety of choice from an industry that had now spent decades finely honing its ability to play to specific, defined tastes. Against this ultra-saturated framework of interwoven media properties, what strategies could individual creators employ to differentiate and mark out their work amidst a mass of hyper-commercialised product that clamoured for consumer attention?

In the introduction to his book *Interpreting Anime* (2018), Chris Bolton draws on the theories of Roland Barthes to suggest that, as viewers of anime, we are alternatively immersed fully in its reality, yet cognisant of its artificiality as an artform and piece of visual media. Like a glass window, it is at once both transparent, yet also able to call attention to itself. Looking to an auditory equivalent, the music of composer Yuki Kajiura — famed for soundtracking anime franchises such as *.hack//Sign*,⁷³ *Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle*⁷⁴ and *Sword Art Online*⁷⁵ — provides us with a useful body of work through which we can partake of a similar

⁷² *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, in continuous publication by Shueisha since 1968, is a manga magazine aimed toward a demographic of young boys and has spawned many of Japan's biggest selling comic series. From its sales highs in the 1990s it has since fallen to a circulation of around 1.6 million copies per week.

⁷³ *.hack//Sign* aired 2002, TV Tokyo. The series follows central character Tsukasa as they navigate the complexities of short-term memory loss as well as the strange video-game world they find themselves trapped inside. The franchise would see a number of video-game instalments and further spin-off series follow throughout the subsequent decade.

⁷⁴ *Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle* (*Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle*) aired 2005-2006, NHK-E, with a subsequent series and direct-to-video releases following 2007-2009. Based on a manga series by female group CLAMP, running 2003-2009 in Kodansha's *Weekly Shōnen Magazine*. The series follows young girl Sakura and the fantastical quest to recover her memories, found in the form of angelic feathers scattered across multiple dimensions.

⁷⁵ *Sword Art Online* (*Sōdo Āto Onrain*) aired 2012, Tokyo MX, with subsequent TV instalments and film spin-offs continuing to the present day. Based on a novel series by author Reki Kawahara. The

observation. Kajiura's music, which combines traditionally orchestrated classical music with electronic dance music beats and melodies inspired by folk song, operates within a similar metric, both fulfilling its remit as 'transparent' background music, but also calling attention to itself through its splicing together of disparate genres and styles.

This chapter will look to present a critical close reading of Kajiura's distinct 'formula' of composition, drawing on Bolton's theoretical work to present a model of interpretation that evidences the capacity of her compositional output to function as both 'soundtrack' and 'song' simultaneously. Here, I will look to explore how Kajiura's music exists very much within the wider systems of the anime industry and its media mix model, but is also able to capitalise on what Bolton terms 'formal experimentation' to subvert what is heard (and how it is heard) by audiences.

It is useful at this point to provide a working definition of a selection of interrelated terms that I will return to a number of times across this chapter. Firstly, there is 'form', which is in essence the particular shape or configuration of something, as a verb, it can also imply a bringing together or 'forming' of a whole from component parts. The emphasis in both cases is in specificity or particularity — a 'form' becomes a form through our recognition of its shape. This runs in tandem with a definition of 'format', which further reinforces ideas of a conventional or standard way or shaping or laying something out. Lastly, there is 'formula', which alludes again to the ingredients or components from which something might be made — by following a procedural formula, we create something or a particular shape or mould. In all instances, these definitions give us something identifiable that we might seek to locate, through close analysis, in both Kajiura's compositional output, and the activities involved in its creation and distribution.⁷⁶

In undertaking this approach, I will look to build on the case study methodology previously applied in earlier chapters to the careers of Tetsuya Komuro and Yōko Kanno. There, by following a sequence of events over a chronological period of time, it was possible to draw together a relationship between phenomena (the contemporary facts of their careers) with the real-world historical context of Japan in a given decade. To go further however, as I bring my survey of anime music and the role occupied by its creators closer to the present day,

series depicts a number of game-like virtual reality worlds in which the protagonists invariably find themselves trapped in.

⁷⁶ These definitions are amalgamations drawn from a combination of Oxford Languages (<https://languages.oup.com/>) and the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>).

this chapter will look to dive deeper into some of the rationale and motivation behind key creative decisions.

Wilbur Schramm, in an attempt to define the cornerstones of the case study methodology, alludes to much the same essence — namely, its capacity to ‘illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result’ (Schramm 1971, 6). This agency, this attempt to understand the rationale behind creative and commercial decision-making, lies at the heart of our core research question in attributing value to the role of the composer within the anime industry. This ‘decision or set of decisions’ is picked up on and developed by Robert Yin as what he terms ‘presumed causal links’ (Yin 2017, 19). It is these links which the case study attempts primarily to explain, but also to aid in the guidance of theoretical propositions, based on prior, iterative developments. Envisioned as a whole, this might form a kind of ‘case study of case studies’, in which the singular parts act as their own causal links in informing the whole.

Part of my rationale in picking Kajiura as the focus of this chapter is for precisely this reason. Like Komuro, her status as a musician that operates within the fields of both soundtrack work and popular song mean that many of the theoretical conclusions regarding the ‘role’ of the ‘brand name’ composer born out in our study of Komuro can be iteratively developed when transposed to a new object of study, in a new time period. Whereas Komuro’s music represented a kind of auditory aestheticism, manifesting the desires and dreams of its audience in a commodified format, I argue here that as we move into the 21st century, consumers required a different set of parameters by which they might find value within the field of anime music. Komuro’s music sold a fantasy rooted in the glamour of the real world, one that positively oozed every kind of excess present in the bubble economy of 1980s Japan. But the fantasy conjured up by Kajiura’s music would present a very different kind of aesthetic — one completely at odds with reality.

The emphasis within this chapter on establishing a clear rationale for the use of ‘formula’ within anime music is driven by this parallel. While a description of music might tell us what it sounds like, or even how it makes us feel, it is an understanding of the formulas used in its creation that can truly tell us ‘why’ it is important that it sounds the way it does. Not simply what aesthetic it might aim for, but a thorough understanding of how its components interact — in doing so, what exists in a secondary role is given opportunity to become primary. Thus, through a close reading of Kajiura’s compositional output throughout her career, I seek to illustrate how the blending of diverse genres and release strategies was able to elevate her

output beyond simple 'background' music, bringing it, instead, to the foreground in the way audiences both in Japan, and internationally, would engage with it.

Part 1 — Yuki Kajiura — Building familiarity through formula

In the opening to his study on Toru Takemitsu⁷⁷ — perhaps the most famous and internationally renowned of all Japanese composers — Siddons lays out the value of 'biographical background' as a necessary element in the 'interpretive' study of a composer's works (Siddons 2001, 1). This material is suggested to be essential to fully understanding the 'mind and creative spirit' of said individual, especially when presented in tandem with an analytical close reading of their musical works and accompanying interviews. To this end, my study of Yuki Kajiura will fall along a similar biographical model, charting the historical course of her career and how the creative decisions she made at each juncture would be informed by both past experience, and a desire to form something new moving into the future.

Born in Tokyo in 1965, Kajiura's interest in music began at a young age, and she would often accompany her father on the family's piano (Toole 2016). Kajiura would subsequently spend a number of years living in West Germany in the 1970s, when her family relocated due to her father's work. On returning to Japan, she began working as a systems engineer, before turning her interests wholly to a career in music in the early 1990s. Those early dabblings with the piano alongside her father would stand her in good stead for her earliest efforts as she took on the role of keyboardist in the two-piece pop act See-Saw alongside vocalist Chiaki Ishikawa.⁷⁸ Their material would certainly showcase Kajiura's proficiency at piano, but the style would initially be bland, generic and largely in keeping with the formulaic sounds of their J-Pop peers. By the late 1990s, Kajiura had branched out into creating soundtracks for a number of videogames and stage musicals, including most notably a spin-off of the anime series *Sakura Wars*.⁷⁹ Kajiura's long relationship providing music for anime would rapidly become her core focus however, beginning in earnest with the background

⁷⁷ Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996). Japanese composer who rose to international fame in the 1950s and 1960s, combined Western compositional techniques with traditional Japanese instruments in works such as the acclaimed composition *November Steps*.

⁷⁸ Chiaki Ishikawa (1969-). Lead vocalist of See-Saw, alongside Yuki Kajiura (keyboards). The duo released a number of theme songs for anime series, as well as writing tracks for other artists. Ishikawa appeared as a Guest of Honour at the 2007 Los Angeles Anime Expo.

⁷⁹ The *Sakura Wars* (*Sakura Taisen*) franchise began in 1996 as a videogame series set in an alternate version of 1920s Japan in which women with magical powers use steam-powered robots to battle demons. From 1997 onward a number of anime incarnations were also released. Kajiura was involved in the musical iteration in 2002. There was also a themed cafe in Tokyo selling merchandise related to the series.

music for the film *Kimagure Orange Road: Summer's Beginning*.⁸⁰ The movie's sweeping electronic score plays like a blend between Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark's *Souvenir* and the *Chariots of Fire* theme song — In essence, it is a work that very much basks in the long afterglow cast by the sounds of the 1980s, like the songs of See-Saw, generic in its synthetic glossiness, and yet hinting more overtly at the kind of glistening electronic aesthetic that would define Kajiura's music for years to come.



Figure 9: Yuki Kajiura on the cover of her 2003 solo album *Fiction*.

It was with Kajiura's next work — for the adaptation of *shōnen* manga series *Eat Man*⁸¹ — that the formative elements of her trademark style would truly lock into place. The anime adaptation of *Eat Man* aired during a period in the late 1990s where Space-Western styled anime series such as *Cowboy Bebop*⁸² and *Trigun*⁸³ were immensely popular, and Kajiura's

⁸⁰ *Kimagure Orange Road* (*Kimagure Orenji Rōdo*) originally aired 1987-1988, Nippon TV, and was based on a *Weekly Shōnen Jump* manga (1984-1987) by Izumi Matsumoto. With the series' core premise centering around a love triangle, the 1996 film outing *Summer's Beginning* (*Shin Kimagure Orenji Rōdo — Soshite, Ano Natsu no Hajimari*) — which Kajiura soundtracked — would be notable in taking a more mature, adult feel than the rest of the series.

⁸¹ *Eat Man* (*Ītoman*) aired 1997, TV Tokyo. In a high-tech future, the series follows the episodic adventures of protagonist Bolt Crank who has the ability to eat anything and then reproduce that object from his body at will.

⁸² An in-depth discussion of *Cowboy Bebop* and its Yoko Kanno-composed soundtrack can be found in Chapter 3.

⁸³ *Trigun* (*Toraigan*) aired 1998, TV Tokyo. Based on a manga by Yasuhiro Nightow that would run 1995-1997 in *Monthly Shōnen Captain*, followed by a subsequent run from 1997-2007 in the more adult-orientated *Young King OURs*. Heavily informed by classic cowboy Western narratives (but given a sci-fi twist), the series follows gunman Vash the Stampede as he does battle with bounty hunters.

music would ultimately plug neatly into this soundscape too, imbuing her imagining of the series' world with a distinctly cowboy-esque veneer. The soundtrack's standout moment — *Do you believe in dreams?* — pairs an elegiac synthesiser melody that could have come straight from *Blade Runner* to low-slung, scratchy guitar lines. It conjures up vistas of dusty, windswept deserts and the sweep of a vast, star-filled cosmos.

Part of the appeal of Kajiura's soundtrack work, even at these formative stages of her career, was that her music did not feel wholly like a soundtrack — in the traditional sense of 'background' music, at any rate. Kajiura's music presented itself not as a subdued side-show, gently lifting up and amplifying the visuals — rather, it was often the main attraction itself. This quest to 'attract' listeners to her music would become a defining trope of Kajiura's career, and indeed, in 2001 she would resurrect her pop outfit See-Saw (which had disbanded in 1995, exactly as her soundtrack work began to consume more of her time) to provide a number of vocal-led opening and ending theme songs for anime series for which she was already providing the soundtrack. This move into theme songs would highlight a number of factors. Firstly, that the received 'form' of a vocal-led theme song for an anime series potentially necessitates a different kind of musical entity (a solo singer or group, as opposed to a composer). Secondly, that a composer able to work in both mediums might be ideally placed to establish a desirable sonic unity or consistency across a show — ensuring both 'song' and 'soundtrack' belong to a same general palette of sounds.

This adaptability, of providing both 'song' and 'soundtrack' was not new — indeed, as discussed in my prior chapter, Tetsuya Komuro had made a similar success of fluidly operating between the realms of pop music and anime soundtrack since the mid 1980s. But, while Kajiura's music was increasingly becoming part of the foreground, her own persona — unlike Komuro, who managed to successfully pull off a transition into a nationally famous, moneyed 'music tycoon' in the 1990s (Craig 2000, 5) — seemed to remain very much part of the backdrop. A video of an early televised live performance by See-Saw in 1994⁸⁴ provides an interesting insight into how the role of the composer/producer can even manifest itself in a spatial format, reinforcing the sense of the composer role as secondary to that of the 'performer'. In the video, Kajiura remains not only toward the back of the stage throughout, but is situated behind a bulky synthesiser keyboard that masks and obscures her own bodily persona — it is almost as if she is more machine than person. Instead, vocalist Chiaki Ishikawa remains largely front and centre, a position of prominence through an inferred 'dominance' of vocal delivery over the musical accompaniment. This dynamic would remain

⁸⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tCC81bb-Tg>

in place through to the two-piece's music videos in the early 2000s,⁸⁵ as part of a so-called 'singers take centre stage' formula that has become so ingrained within popular music as to become almost a stereotype (Cameron 2015, 818-830).

While Kajiura's initial dalliance with pop-stardom may have forced her to confront head-on the pressures of conforming to a wider received sense of what musicians operating within the sphere of the Japanese pop market of the 1990s should look and sound like, anime soundtracks presented her with a freer hand. Building on many of the ideas first laid down in her work for the *Eat-Man* soundtrack, in 2001 Kajiura would work on a twenty-six episode original-to-TV series, *Noir*⁸⁶ (like *Eat-Man*, also directed by Kōichi Mashimo),⁸⁷ and it is here that she would find the scope to settle on a stylistic formula for her music that we might reasonably call her 'trademark'. With the series' plot following the lives of two female assassins against a convincingly realised European setting and depiction of a mafia-inspired criminal underworld, the resonance of 'noir' — as a genre-d backdrop — would inspire Kajiura to infuse her accompanying music with Italian and Latin lyrics, culminating in two of the soundtrack's highlights. The first — *Canta Per Me* — is a wistful, rhythmically acoustic track, mournful violin work combining with the vocals to deliver an emotionally complex tale of longing. Strong, melodic violin instrumentation would become a cornerstone to Kajiura's compositional style, and it re-occurs in the second standout track — *Salva Nos* — this time twinned with the electronic elements Kajiura had been honing in her previous work. Here though, instead of turning an eye back toward the electronic flourishes of the 1980s, the sound is resolutely contemporary — utilising a pounding trance-like backbeat that could have come straight from a Mediterranean night club. In stark contrast to this sleek, modern backdrop, the vocal topline is sung in decadent, choral Latin — an operatic overture that sets an ominous, grandiose flavour as the song builds to a crescendo.

The use of Latin and Italian in the songs' lyrics provides an interesting spin on a formula of linguistic play that has a long history within Japanese pop music, typically in terms of a smattering of English lines to add a spark of colour to a song predominantly sung in Japanese (Craig 2000, 89-99). For Kajiura though, the use of alternate languages (and the fact that many of her songs would be sung wholly in those languages, and not merely a

⁸⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1n2VOnuH5Y>

⁸⁶ *Noir (Nowāru)* aired 2001, TV Tokyo. The series follows two young female assassins who journey together through Europe, seeking answers about their mysterious pasts. The show typified the 'girls-with-guns' archetype which would become popular within anime during the 2000s.

⁸⁷ Kōichi Mashimo (1952-) Anime director and founder of production studio Bee Train who would become well known for shows including *Eat Man*, *Noir*, *.hack//Sign* and *Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle* — all of which Kajiura would soundtrack.

snatch of phrases) was less a question of injecting ready-made coolness, but rather part of a compositional formula fundamentally linked to melody. 'The melody itself can *only* fit the Japanese or English language, so there's no other way for it to fit anything else' Kajiura would state in an interview. 'It's not a decision, so much as the melody itself dictates the language' (Hanson 2012). For Kajiura, alternate languages essentially 'unlocked' new compositional routes for her material beyond 'Japanese melodies' (or perhaps more specifically, melodies which would necessitate a Japanese vocal). In this way, for soundtracks like those she created for *Noir*, it was not so much a case that the foreign language lyrics made the material stand out and catch the attention of listeners, but that the melodies they were paired to sounded like nothing they had heard before (except, of course, other songs by Yuki Kajiura).

The exciting, exotic sounds of the *Noir* soundtrack would prove to be a winning formula, and lead to three full-length collections of music from the anime series to be released on CD (including a two-disc set that collected together vocal-led songs from the series as well as out-take tracks). This 'formatting' of the music is worth further discussion, because in 'liberating' the music from the animation it was originally designed to accompany, allows me to ask to what extent the very nature of a soundtrack, with its own respective functions and formulas for creating meaning when presented in tandem with visuals, must suddenly provide a very different set of listening criteria when listened to, in isolation? To exist as a separate CD, the music must, it follows, contain a value to the listener beyond that of sitting and pressing repeat on a VHS or DVD, or attending a film screening multiple times, to experience the same scene (and its music) again and again. The logical answer here would be one of technically-mediated convenience — the format of the music inherent in providing an easier, quicker 'access route' to the music for the listener. This might immediately suggest that the value of the music here is contained wholly within the music itself — but rather, I want to suggest that it is in fact in the instance of recognisability — the desire to hear again what we already know, that the real value is to be found. Just as we can identify causal links in the creative process of a composer, the consumer also undergoes a series of causal links in their consumption of that music. In this instance, the key causal drive is toward ever-increasing consumer choice, first through vinyl, then CDs and ultimately MP3s — such that it is not the format itself that gives value to the listener, but what that format allows the listener to *do, to hear, to experience*. In this sense, a great deal of that value is already contained within ourselves, with the music acting more as a kind of mimetic aid to allow us to access, clarify and reacquaint ourselves with that stored value (the song that we know we want to hear again).

This *modus operandi* of ‘more, of the same, again’ would manifest itself time and time again throughout Kajiura’s career. The success of the *Noir* soundtrack would see Kajiura return for a third Koichi Mashimo-directed series, *.hack//Sign*. This pairing of Kajiura and Mashimo in itself highlights another kind of formula — a consistency in creative talent in anime production. Across every aspect of Kajiura’s career — whether in her music itself, or the kinds of anime project she would become paired with, there existed a resolute uniformity. Whether working with lyric-less background music or vocal-fronted pop songs, her music sounded consistently ‘of a whole’ — by which I mean that her pop songs sounded like soundtracks with vocals added, and her soundtracks sounded like pop songs with vocals subtracted. This interchangeability, or consistency in musical feel, would prove crucial in solidifying Kajiura’s style, but also to establishing it as a kind of auditory ‘brand’.

Most indicative of this would be Kajiura’s work for the anime series *Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle*. Adapted from a manga by the acclaimed all-female authorial team CLAMP,⁸⁸ *Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle* ran in a number of incarnations from 2005 all the way through to 2009, first as a TV series, then as a collection of direct-to-video releases and a theatrical film. Kajiura would provide the music for every incarnation of the franchise, and her involvement with the *Tsubasa* series across these five years would set up a precedent that she would ultimately follow into the next decade with similar franchises such as *Sword Art Online* and the *Fate/stay night* series. Just as these series might have a recognisable logo, characteristic art style and all round consistent ‘look and feel’, Kajiura’s music would emulate this within the sonic dimension, each iteration building on and honing what had gone before it. Kajiura’s music had always incorporated choral elements, but it is with the *Tsubasa* series that her music would become increasingly grandiose, with the vocals becoming more overtly operatic in tone, the scale more magnificent. While previous tracks such as *Salva Nos* often felt like the classical elements had simply been lain on top of a relentless trance beat, newer material like *A Song of Storm and Fire* and *Synchronicity* (both taken from the *Tsubasa* soundtrack) felt like a far more seamless blend between the two defining components of Kajiura’s sound, a technologically mediated ‘upgrade’ on Kajiura’s style enabled by advances in recording technology over the past ten years of her career. In these newer tracks, the ‘produced’ feel of Kajiura’s work would serve as an auditory quality in and of itself, the depth and richness of the production quality marking this music out as something of a higher intrinsic value.

⁸⁸ Although active from 1987, from 1993 onwards CLAMP have been comprised of four core members and are best known for the series *Cardcaptor Sakura (Kādokyaputā Sakura, 1996-2000)*, the anime adaptation of which became popular outside of Japan in the early 2000s when it was marketed by TV networks in the UK and US as similar to the Pokemon franchise.

Elsewhere, this sense of ‘upgrading’ would take on a far more literal sense. The track *I Talk To The Rain* — which features a prominent, haunting violin melody — would find itself recycled into the later track *Oblivious*, produced by Kajiura for the soundtrack to the film series *The Garden of Sinners*.⁸⁹ Here, the melody is transposed from the violin to choral vocals, the tempo of the track is increased, and a rapid percussion track is added. The result is technically a ‘new’ song, but it is also a re-formatting of something old — the same formula projected into a superficially different mould. In this manner, fans of Kajiura’s music would find immense familiarity and reassurance in her music. For all its initial exoticism — utilising foreign lyrics as well as striking combinations of classical and electronic elements — it would sound like something they already knew from the very first listen, precisely because in many cases, it contained melodies and structures they had heard before.

Throughout this section, I have sought to offer a flavour of what Kajiura’s music sounds like. This does not come from a formal, musicologist-driven perspective, seeking to classify using technical language what Kajiura’s music might be like if quantified on printed paper. Instead, I have tried to offer a looser, more feeling-driven understanding of her compositional formula, tracing a lineage across her career of the various sonic components that make up her ‘style’. Ethnomusicologist Kiri Miller has described a desire to break ‘the artificial walls that have often separated music scholarship from other fields of inquiry’ (Miller 2012, 18-19) — and it is to this same end that I approach Kajiura’s music with the models of close-reading and interpretation developed by Bolton in his approach to anime itself. As listeners of music, and by extension, the digital media formats that it is increasingly conveyed to us on, we are all, as Miller puts it: ‘already more musical than they might realize’ (Miller 2012, 19). Thus, just as a formula is arguably meritless without proof of its efficiency, we would argue that it is in the very ‘use’ of music, the listening-to of it, that we find its value.

One way of approaching this is to examine a distinct ‘formula’ of the listening process itself and the way this prioritises ‘similarity’ as a key metric of a pleasurable listening experience. A study by Dongjing Wang et al. (2018) presents one means of doing this, visualising the embedded stylistic ‘tags’ (e.g. rock, Japanese, soundtrack, female vocal) submitted by listeners to recommendation site last.fm to build a better picture of their listening sequence

⁸⁹ *The Garden of Sinners* also known as *Kara no Kyōkai* (lit. *Boundary of Emptiness*) was released as a series of eight films between 2007-2013 and was based on a novel series by Kinoko Nasu. The story centres around teenage girl Shiki Ryōgi who battles supernatural forces using powers of perception gained after surviving a near-fatal accident.

(the order in which someone listens to a series of songs). What emerged was a model displaying a high degree of clustering, with the reasoning being that:

similar musicians' music pieces usually have similar genres, and music pieces of specific genres tend to be listened to by users that have similar general/contextual preferences. In other words, similar music pieces tend to appear in the same playing sequences. For example, a piece of rock music is likely to appear in the playing sequences of rock fans instead of classical music fans. (Wang 2018, 16-17)

In one of their examples, the music of Yuki Kajiura clusters together with that of Studio Ghibli composer Joe Hisaishi,⁹⁰ highlighting a degree of similarity between them (i.e. 'Japanese composers' creating 'anime soundtracks'). However, while there is some correlation between the music of Kajiura and Hisaishi, Kajiura's music also clusters closer to that of Canadian pop musician Justin Bieber, highlighting how Kajiura's predilection for vocal-led songs and fast dance beats shifts her music closer toward a pop trajectory. Thus, we have a picture of Kajiura operating in many ways at the centre of a multi-sectioned Venn-diagram, brushing up against the various realms of Japanese anime soundtrack and English-language pop, but also resolutely, and consistently, operating within her own sphere of similarity as an artist herself.

When Bolton (2018, 81-83), in his model of interpretation, draws on Barthes and Sobchak to suggest that we need a more rigorous 'theorization of the link between identification and vision', we might also ask, what about a link between identification and hearing? He suggests the key metric here is 'focus' — the measure by which we make our identification 'more rigorous'. Technology is put forward as one means of achieving this focus, and that no matter how 'transparent' our lens is, it nevertheless alters our experience of the thing we are interacting with. As such, we might look to the above example from Wang et al. as a way of rationalising and de-mystifying the pleasures of a 'similar' listening experience. Through the hard data gathered from multitudes of listeners and the filing-system-like categorisation of songs through stylistic 'tags', the listening experience becomes database-like, in a manner similar to what Adorno pre-empted when he discussed the 'fetishism' of 'machine music' as part of a wholesale adaptation of the way we listen to music (Adorno 1941, 41). And yet, there is perhaps another means of offering the 'focus' suggested by Bolton — a focus that turns the lens inward on itself and turns the creator themselves into their own interpreter.

With this in mind, and a general overview of Kajiura's music established, I now turn to a closer analysis of how she considers and talks about her own compositional process.

⁹⁰ Further discussion of Joe Hisaishi and his relationship with Studio Ghibli can be found in Chapter 3.

Through a survey of a number of interviews between Kajiura and the US website Anime News Network, we are offered a direct window into the kind of creative decisions made by Kajiura, the 'causal links' discussed in the introduction that act as the ties between those decisions and the kinds of output they facilitate. Just as the experience of listening to a musician's material offers one angle of interpretation, as equally valid is the interpretation offered by that musician of their *own* material. While their answers may not offer an objective, holistic 'truth' of how that piece of music or its method of creation should be considered, I argue that they expose some of the formulae at play beneath the veneer of the finished product.

A fundamental part of this dynamic is the format of Kajiura's music as 'attached to' anime. Whether as background music or as an opening / ending theme, while it may certainly be listened to separately, it is created for the very specific purpose of being utilised in tandem with another piece of media. In an interview conducted by Anime News Network with Kajiura (Hanson 2012), the composer highlights an immediate thematic connection between her music and its application to anime. Kajiura sees many of her tracks as informed by the gender of the main character of the anime series that they accompany, i.e. the male lead for *Sacred Seven*⁹¹ inspired the 'powerful' tone of its opening theme *Stone Cold*, whilst the female lead for the *Garden of Sinners* movies led to a more 'feminine' compositional style.

This 'If X, then Y' formularisation of the creative process might initially seem facile. Why does a male character automatically equate with power, and a female character with 'femininity'? But reading further into Kajiura's comments, we get a sense that this manner of systematic linking is fundamental to her compositional style, as she alludes to elsewhere in the same interview when she indicates that when she is happy, she makes 'happy' songs, or that 'if the melody is very high key, then somebody with a high voice will be picking up that song' (Hanson 2012). Just as with our earlier discussion of the function of similarity and familiarity in providing a satisfactory and consistent listening experience, it is these explanatory comments by Kajiura that provide a granular exposition of the components that help make up that experience of familiarity. She then provides another, particularly apt example in relation to the idea of 'genre'.

'Q: What "genre" do you feel yourself most comfortable in composing, regarding your music and style?

⁹¹ *Sacred Seven (Seikuriddo Seibun)* aired 2011, MBS. Produced by studio Sunrise (best known for *Mobile Suit Gundam*), this sci-fi series unfolds in a manner similar to shows such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (discussed in the previous chapter), with the show's protagonist doing battle with a different monstrous creature in each weekly instalment.

Yuki Kajiura: "I think the word 'genre' is not applicable for music itself. Music was born before the word 'genre,' so I'm not comfortable with the definition. But... it is necessary to 'genre' things, because that's how you communicate the music with words, what you're trying to express. Not just the music and melody, but the words have a big portion of it. So genre is important, though I never even consider what genre I am aiming for, or what is my definition of 'genre' in my music, so even now I'm searching. I don't know what genre I am." (Hanson 2012)

Kajiura's answer here unravels a fundamental tension between the creation of and listening to of music, as well as a means to sufficiently describe that process, between the raw experience of it, and the expression of that experience. In Kajiura's statement that it is 'necessary' to genre things — employing *genre* as a verb — she acknowledges how, as consumers of music, we inherently reach for the recognisability lent by generic forms (pop, dance, classical) to classify and comprehend what we are engaging with. Thus, in the act of giving genre to a piece of music, we also give it form — or at the very least, a form more tangible than the ethereal state it occupies when it first enters our ears.

In 2016, Kajiura would conduct a second, longer interview with Anime News Network, in which she provided a more detailed look at her compositional process. Here, Kajiura candidly acknowledges the sense of 'same-ness' or over-familiarity present in her productions, what she terms the 'style' of it:

I oftentimes hear that my music incorporates a style that is too easily recognizable. So I know this is going to sound strange coming from me, but I actually make it a habit not to create music that is constrained to exhibiting "my style." I'm only concerned about creating my best work for every project I am given. That's why I am still unsure as to whether or not this "style" of mine actually exists. The only thing is that I cannot help it when things that I like come out in the songs that I compose. I probably can't create any sounds that I do not like, and maybe to other people that is what they see as a certain style. (Toole 2016)

Acknowledging her own 'recognisability' highlights an important dimension of self-reflexivity to Kajiura's awareness as a composer. Despite her claim that she is not confined to creating works that are consistent with her 'style', this style nevertheless appears to emerge regardless, due to a concerted effort to create 'her best work' each time. This 'cannot help it' element of her style suggests that the formulas present in Kajiura's work are not necessarily consciously chosen elements — but rather, that these very same formulae, through repetition, become ingrained and unconscious within the creative process. Kajiura states that she cannot 'create any sounds that I do not like'. Deeply cognisant and familiar with her own likes and dislikes, despite her protestations that she makes it a habit to avoid creating works

within her own 'style', the matter of fact — born out in examples like the visual clustering in the study by Wang et al. — is that this remains impossible because her own tastes ensure she continues to draw from a palette of sounds that are familiar and pleasurable to her. As a creator of music, Kajiura will also inherently always be a listener to that very same music too, 'listening-while-creating', engaging in the same minutiae of interpretation conducted by the wider listening public at large.

Above, I sought one particular kind of 'interpretation' of Kajiura's music, one that — through close analysis of her work and accompanying interviews — attempts to surface the underlying formulae of compositional style at work, and how these may have come to be formed through the causal links of her early career. In identifying and describing this style across a number of formative works, I suggest that 'recognisability' would become a key metric for Kajiura's music, a signifier both of a successful 'connection' with a listener, but also a vital ingredient in developing their appetite for more of the same. This shift in emphasis toward the listener suggests it is in the 'listening' itself that we find direct parallels with the theory of 'interpreting' anime put forward by Bolton. This would suggest we must more deeply consider the life Kajiura's music takes on beyond the immediate grasp she holds over it during its creation process. In this regard, the historical significance of the new millennium in which Kajiura rose to prominence within the anime industry takes on particular relevance — not only in terms of the new formats digital media presented for music distribution, but the new frontiers these formats opened up beyond Japan's own borders. With Kajiura's style now readily established amongst Japanese anime viewers as a recognisable, identifiable 'concept', the stage was set for that concept to take on new life, with new audiences, abroad.

Part 2 — Sending sounds beyond Japan — Digitisation as a facilitator for global access

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Japanese composers and pop producers such as Tetsuya Komuro mined the aesthetic influence of electronic dance music popular in European club culture at the time to present an on-trend soundtrack to Japanese audiences eager for an exotic, aspirational taste of the high life. By the early 2000s however, the trend had arguably reversed, with a distinct brand of made-in-Japan dance music now flowing back to Europe and the USA (McGray 2002, 53), where it was picked up by an increasingly digital-savvy audience for Japanese pop culture (including anime). The clear recognisability of Kajiura's style, attached to many of the most popular animated shows of the decade, had by this point

made her one of the anime industry's most notable 'star' composers. Meanwhile, the release of the phenomenally successful Playstation 2 games console in March 2000 provided a new canvas for Kajiura to work with — her music would now also soundtrack the videogames *Blood: The Last Vampire* (2000)⁹² and *Xenosaga* (2004, 2006).⁹³

In considering the 2000s as the decade in which the internet facilitated the rapid uptake of anime as a globally consumed product (through both illegal online file-sharing, and later, officially licensed streaming services), allows me to also question how its ability to function as a 'vehicle' for the music attached to it is a role ideally suited to the kind of short-form video content favoured by digital distribution platforms such as YouTube. As concise nuggets of exportable pop-cultural output, Kajiura's music and the anime it accompanied presented as a 'total' package that would deliver on its prescribed formula time and time again. By constructing a very clear sonic imprint or 'formula' for her music, Kajiura's 'brand name' appeal emerged at precisely the right moment to tap into this broadened platform for her output.

Clements sees 'computerisation' as fundamental to the changes that swept through the anime industry at the turn of the millennium (2013, 191). This was not limited to direct changes in the anime production process itself (drawing, colouring and compositing the animation digitally, as opposed to via traditional, physical cell-based processes), but also in how the success of the gaming industry and other forms of digital media provided 'new work opportunities' for anime studios and the injection of collaborative investment capital. By 1998, ratings data from Tokyo TV suggested that as many as 60 percent of sponsors involved with currently airing anime series were games companies or 'audio visual equipment manufacturers' (Clements 2013, 194). This broadening of the anime 'pot', as a result of a proliferation of 'players', each with a vested interest in the success of their project, would ultimately become a fundamental driver in the kind of interconnected, newly globalised framework the anime industry would begin to take on in the 21st century. As Ryotaro Mihara puts it: 'Anime's globalisation is not insulated from such conflict, but rather revolves in the midst of it, becoming enmeshed (and 'mediated') in the web of discrepant relationships

⁹² The *Blood: The Last Vampire* videogame was released as two instalments for the Playstation 2 console. Both instalments were later compiled together in 2006 for a re-release on the handheld Playstation Portable (PSP). The game's original release in 2000 accompanied an anime film of the same title from studio Production I.G in which the girl Saya — implied to be the last remaining vampire in the world — does battle with horrific bat-like creatures called chiropterans.

⁹³ The *Xenosaga* franchise was released over three instalments for Playstation 2 from 2002-2006, with Kajiura soundtracking the latter two. Set against a complex science-fiction backdrop, the plot involves humans, synthetic humans and battle androids confronting an ancient alien race in an epic battle for survival.

between relevant players' (Mihara 2020, 103). Indeed, Mihara's analogy of a 'web' is an apt one, as it is exactly this kind of enmeshing — a sense that all the players involved are not only connected, but that tugging on one strand will have a direct and proportional effect on all the others — that would see Kajiura's music transcend to new audiences via the 'vehicle' of the anime it accompanied.

Kajiura, as one of these 'players', occupies a blurred role — as composer, her involvement with any given anime work is first and foremost that of a creator. And yet, as Mihara alludes to, the lack of 'insulation' between involved parties suggests that we also read the choice in her attachment to a series, her 'brand name' value, as it were, as containing a very real commercial impetus too. Indeed, it is exactly these kinds of roles that Mihara would direct us to, arguing that we should actively seek out and 'look for the players who are trying to bridge the conflicts between art and commerce (Mihara 2020, 103). This notion is further born out in comments by Maria Grajdian, who sees anime soundtracks as representing 'a strong professional industry branch', citing Kajiura's popularity in particular (alongside Joe Hisaishi, Yoko Kanno and Kenji Kawai) as a direct result of her composition of works for anime, and the demand this symbiotic relationship creates. For Grajdian, the value in anime music is in 'creating a specific atmosphere and in emphasizing particular emotional states and transitions' (2017, 55) — in this sense, it has real, defined agency. His focus on the 'specific' and 'particular' speak to an awareness of the kinds of formula at work within anime music, a sense that taken in tandem with Mihara's model of enmeshed players, sees Kajiura as tasked with very particular goals to fulfil as part of the wider 'team' making up an anime's production team. With this in mind, I might read Kajiura's former career as a systems engineer in direct relation to the kind of music she would go on to create, a style inherently driven by adherence to a formula and system. Or, as Ryosuke Takahashi puts it: 'many media staff as individuals who fail to attain their original goal... bring its tropes to their second-choice profession' (Takahashi 2011, 53, cited in Clements 2013, 193).

The theme of enmeshed systems is one that would ironically manifest at multiple levels across Kajiura's career. Not only would the theme of video games and virtual worlds often be a core theme in the stories of the series she provided music for (*.hack//Sign*, *Sword Art Online*), but her music — through its connection with these forms of media — would occupy an enticing nexus of cross-pollination for the increasing market of individuals outside of Japan with interests in video games, anime and classical music. In some cases, this convergence of interests would even spur listeners on to become musicians themselves (Gallagher 2019, 1-2), responding to what Patrick St. Michel calls a 'common entry point' (Michel 2018). For these 'engaged' listeners-turned-creators, Kajiura's music acted as part of

a gateway channelling their interest in Japanese visual media, in which the attached-ness of the soundtrack as medium — something present in both anime and videogames — provided a kind of sonic glue of consistency tying the two spheres of interest together. Karen Collins envisions this kind of relationship between listeners and music as a kind of ‘intermediary space between ourselves and the virtual world’ (Collins 2013, 58), something she sees as reaffirmed by Altman’s (1992, 60-61) comments that sound can ‘insert’ us into the ‘very intersection of two spaces which the image alone is incapable of linking, thus giving us the sensation of controlling the relationship between those spaces’. This intersection of spaces or common entry point affords a view of audiences moving fluidly between visual and auditory references, tied together within a broader interlinked zone of familiarity. A video game, an anime series and a piece of music are all different forms of media, but in the intersection between them — through the familiarity of a common aesthetic, audio and visual functioning hand in hand — a fan of one is quite likely to be a fan of another.

The sense that the ‘form’ of Kajiura’s music — as a soundtrack specifically to a certain ‘kind’ of anime or videogame — might partly dictate what it ends up sounding like is an important one to consider. Clements comments that in the early days of computer animation form had largely ‘driven’ content (2013, 197), and that the rudimentary computer graphics of the time were often put to best use largely in science-fiction anime as ‘heads-up displays, computer readouts and depictions of cyberspace’. In essence, it manifested in these forms because these were what it was best suited to deliver. With this in mind, we would look to draw a parallel to a similar form/content dynamic in the use of Kajiura’s music, and how its blend of electronic and classical elements have invariably seen her paired with fantasy or science-fiction shows, or those with a particularly gothic aesthetic. As the anime market in the 2000s trended increasingly toward a proliferation of ‘realistic’ *nichijō* (everyday or slice-of-life) dramas (Clements 2013, 201), the exoticism and fantastical nature of Kajiura’s music allowed it to stand out from the rest of the pack. For Kajiura, this capacity for her music to conjure up fantastical fictional worlds would go hand in hand with its ‘created’ nature:

This is certainly my own personal definition, but I perceive the word “fiction” to mean “created by a person.” In nature, there are many beautiful sounds such as the sounds of water and birdsongs, but people desired something even more magnificent than that which led them to create “music”. This world is overflowing with amazing music and stories that people have created, but we still feel a need for something new, and I absolutely adore that greediness in people. That is why I love the concept of “fiction,” which is a direct product of people's intentions. (Kajiura, cited in Toole 2016)

Kajiura’s comments identify a particular ‘value’ she, as a composer, places on music. For her, music is more than just beautiful background ‘sound’, but something fundamentally

wrapped up in the agency of creation and individual input from a creator. It is this agency, this infusing of 'stories' into the sound, that speaks to the capacity of both creators and consumers to directly overlay their own intentionality onto it. Just as Bolton's ideas call attention to how we interpret a piece of media, the 'greediness' for more that Kajiura alludes to suggests that the very need for music — as opposed to the 'raw' sound found in nature — is that it affords us the opportunity for precisely the kind of added value this interpretation can bring. In considering this dimension of how we listen to the sounds around us, Karen Collins draws on theorist Michel Chion to discuss how our perception of sound is fundamentally altered by how we interact with it: 'Listening is not merely the act of hearing sound but also is consciously attending to sound' (Collins 2013, 4). She refers to Chion's categorisation of a number of basic 'modes of listening', of which the most common is 'causal listening', in which the central parameter is identifying and recognising the 'cause or source of the sound' (Chion 1994, 28). As seen above in the example of fans outside Japan for who Kajiura's music in videogames and anime served as a 'common entry point' to an interest in Japan and Japanese media, knowledge of this cause or source is fundamental in building toward a more sophisticated model of interaction with the music we consume. Consciously attending to sound is not as simple a metric as whether we are or are not doing so in a given moment, rather, we might envision a model of various levels of consciousness — we as listeners moving through them as we become more and more familiar with the music we are consuming.

For the growing pool of fans of Kajiura's music outside Japan, an awareness of the origins of that favourite piece of music they happened to hear in a certain anime series or videogame would bring with it a desire to move beyond simple 'understanding' to a need for discourse between those with knowledge of that music in common. As Kajiura's music spread beyond Japan to other countries around the world, propelled by the anime series it accompanied, Internet-based platforms such as web forums and message boards provided the grounds for this kind of discourse. Whereas in the past, discussion around a niche interest such as anime music might have been limited by the ability of the listener to communicate with an immediate, locally present friendship group (or more distantly, via phone calls and mail), message boards provided a many-to-many feedback model in which group discussion could happen in a far more fluid manner.

Established in 2007, the English-language fan site 'canta-per-me' (named after Kajiura's song of the same name from the *Noir* soundtrack) and its accompanying message board provided precisely this forum for discussion amongst like-minded fans. The website's staff hail from a variety of countries including Canada, Greece, Germany, the Philippines and

Mexico — but are brought together through a common interest in Kajiura's work (or, as the site's tagline puts it 'where we worship Yuki Kajiura').⁹⁴ The site serves as a space to gather together lyrics, sheet music, biographical details about Kajiura and her associated musicians, as well as providing news updates about her forthcoming releases and concert dates. This profusion of informational detail and specialised knowledge – as well as the 'unofficial cultural capital' obtaining it confers on the bearer (Fiske 1992, 33) – stands as a key metric of fandom, with similar observations made within the spheres of manga (Tsai 2016, 491) and anime (Azuma 2009). Viewed through this lens, the interaction of fans outside of Japan with Kajiura's output is important because it suggests an inherent 'identification' with the music above and beyond a base norm. It is not just 'knowledge', but 'specialised knowledge'. It is not merely 'music' entering their ears, but 'music made by Yuki Kajiura'. This dynamic fundamentally rests on the recognisability of the music, not only in an informational sense (*knowing* that it is Kajiura's music because that is what is written on the CD or MP3 file) but more importantly, because it *sounds* like the kind of music Kajiura has always made.

Viewed in the context of 'identification' or 'conscious listening', Kajiura's relevance to my discussion is important when seen in the light of what we might term a 'canon' of anime series consumed, popularised and discussed amongst Anglophone anime fandom. In essence, why is Kajiura's music of particular interest, as opposed to any other composer working on anime music during the same period? In answer to this, we might look to Michelle Jurkiewicz, who sees 'uniqueness' and 'impact on Western audiences' (2019, 4) as key factors in the selection of anime soundtracks for case study analysis. At a time when significant volumes of televised anime were not made available outside of Japan due to a lack of either official international distribution or the interest of illegal fan-subtitlers, the fact that Kajiura rose in prominence enough to warrant a fan-driven message board of the kind highlighted above suggests that her soundtracks matched both these factors — becoming part of an acknowledged 'canon' of work. This trend is one Clements sees as symptomatic of anime consumption in an increasingly digital age, as consumers moved beyond passive 'single viewership' to a more active engagement with the content, something facilitated by the many-to-many model of internet message boards (2013, 192), something also born out in the 'participatory cultures' observed by Henry Jenkins and how the low barrier to entry represented by online message boards is central in the formation of this kind of dynamic (2009, 8-10).

⁹⁴ <https://canta-per-me.net/>

These online web forums were not the only means by which fans outside of Japan utilised the internet to interact with Japanese media. Indeed, a more direct form of engagement would be the illegal distribution of both anime itself, and the music that accompanied it, via peer-to-peer sharing networks. With the popularisation of the internet in the early 2000s, and the rapid increase in faster broadband connections in the latter half of the decade, music piracy would become an era-defining conversation in relation to how listeners interacted with the content they consumed, now unshackled from the physical format that was previously fundamental to the listening process. Putting questions of outright illegality aside, music piracy also opens up new interpretations on the relationship between music creators and consumers. As Chris Anderson suggests:

The reason that piracy is a special class of theft is that the costs to the rightful owner are intangible. If you make a music album that is then pirated, the pirates haven't taken something you own, they have *reproduced* something you own. This is an important distinction, which boils down to the reality that you don't suffer a loss, but rather a *lesser gain*. (2009, 71, cited in Clements 2013, 209) [emphasis in the original]

For the fans of Yuki Kajiura's music situated around the world in the late 2000s, legal avenues to obtain her music would have been severely limited to flying to Japan to purchase her music on CD directly, or importing it via a third party, with the inflated costs this would entail.

By the early 2010s, this 'lesser gain' would represent a body of international fandom (and lost income) sizeable enough to warrant the attentions of Kajiura's Japanese distributors. In 2012, record label FlyingDog⁹⁵ put out a press release to relevant media outlets such as Anime News Network announcing that Kajiura's solo albums (which also incorporated some of her releases as part of See-Saw and FictionJunction⁹⁶) would be made available on iTunes in both the USA and Europe. This was a striking move for the label, considering the famous historical reticence of Japanese music companies not only in releasing their music digitally, but internationally. In this light however, we might read Kajiura's rise in international popularity as ideally timed to play into a gradual warming in the previously frosty Japanese response to these formats of musical release. An international audience presents an inherently low-risk market for digital goods, unlike physical merchandise which requires the

⁹⁵ FlyingDog is a Japanese record label founded in 1997 (under the former name 'M-serve') as an imprint of Victor Entertainment (now part of the conglomerate JVCKenwood). During the 2000s, the label would particularly specialise in anisong artists.

⁹⁶ Like See-Saw, FictionJunction — active from 2008 onward — would function as another of Kajiura's 'branded' vocal groups. A number of the group's members would subsequently form part of the Kajiura-produced group Kalafina.

initial financial outlay for its creation, warehouse storage and export costs, an MP3 file of Kajiura's music is merely one of a potentially infinite number of identical copies.

The press release announcing the availability of Kajiura's music internationally had another surprise in store for US fans, that she would be appearing not only as a guest of honour at the 2012 convention AnimeExpo in Los Angeles, but that she would perform live there alongside FictionJunction as 'a representative musician of Japanimation'. The marketing of this event, as something fundamentally tied to the 'vehicle' of the anime series or 'Japanimation' that Kajiura's music was attached to was a savvy move for Kajiura's distributors — riding the wave of the broader 'Cool Japan' narrative which had by this point been building for quite some time.⁹⁷ By tying Kajiura into a concerted effort of nationally branded 'Japanimation', Kajiura was positioned in stark contrast to some of the prior failed attempts to bring Japanese musicians to the US that had attempted to slot too readily into the existing formulae of a US recording industry (Kao 2012, 27-50), as opposed to focusing on a pre-existing niche of American anime fandom that was a known and quantifiable entity. Kajiura's performance at AnimeExpo would evidently prove to be a success, as it would lead to the announcement of a second live showcase in 2017. Headed up by both Aniplex of America (the US subsidiary of Japanese anime label Aniplex) and Kajiura's talent agency Space Craft Produce, the event was scheduled to take place on January 14 at Hollywood's renowned Dolby Theatre. Whereas Kajiura's previous performance in 2012 was very much under the wider banner of AnimeExpo as a convention for anime fans, in which Kajiura was serving as a 'representative' example of anime music, here she was marketed as the main attraction, with the prestigious venue and headline billing to match.

Just over a week before the event was due to take place, however, disaster struck. As a result of unspecified issues relating to the acquisition of a travel visa for the US, the concert was cancelled (Ressler 2017). Ticket purchasers were compensated with an event pamphlet and exclusive branded pouch advertising the series *Sword Art Online* (for which Kajiura had provided some of her most recent work), but this was scant consolation for fans of the composer who had been hoping for a rare chance to hear her perform live in the US for the first time in five years. This incident in many ways serves as an interesting example of the conflict between the fluidity of an increasingly digitised and borderless 'global' market for music rubbing up against real-world boundaries (e.g. entry visas, the cost of international

⁹⁷ The concept of 'Cool Japan' incorporates aspects of Japanese popular culture (such as anime, music, video-gaming and food) utilised as part of a concerted soft-power 'nation branding' exercise to disseminate the country's appeal to the rest of the world. The term has received extensive coverage within scholarship, including studies by Dalot-Bul (2009), Valaskivi (2013) and Matsui (2014).

travel), leading to a reality in which physical 'access' to musical talent remains a frustrated and inefficient process for an internationally located fanbase. Incidents like this can be seen as conducive to a perceived 'mental wall' that, based on prior experience, discourages future Japanese artists from 'trying to go global' (Kao 2012, 31).

Luckily, for Kajiura's American fanbase, this was not to be the case. Despite the disappointment of Kajiura's cancelled concert, the composer would get a second chance at returning to the US in 2018 when she appeared as part of Anisong World Matsuri, an event held in collaboration with that year's Anime Expo⁹⁸ (Ressler 2018). Held since 2016, the existence of Anisong World Matsuri as a dedicated music-centric showcase, as well as the calibre of talent it attracts, in comparison to smaller showcases seen at other conventions in both the US and Europe, is a testament to the 'visibility' anime music had accrued by the mid-2010s. Anisong was now no longer just something that fans could be sated on by streaming MP3s or watching YouTube videos, they wanted to be able to see and engage with their music stars up close and personal, just as they might any domestic act touring the US.

The value in live performances of this kind is evidently not only for fans, but for the creators and business partners too. Bearing in mind the earlier discussion of Mihara's comments, we can readily view Kajiura as occupying an intermediary space between creative and commercial interests in this respect. In 2002, Tada Makoto estimated the size of the dedicated Japanese anime fan market at 400,000 viewers, only 0.4% of a potential total national viewership. These 'dedicated' fans could be relied upon to spend around 10,000 yen (£80) a month on merchandise (Clements 2013, 203). To this end, the value of widening commercial activities not only into the lucrative sphere of live music, but also to an international fanbase (and the increased opportunities for sale of concert tickets and merchandise they represent) is self-evident. In the case of the Anisong World Matsuri 2018 event at which Kajiura appeared, this commercially orientated mindset would manifest in a tiered pricing structure that skewed toward a more 'premium' experience for fans that were willing to pay more. This pricing structure included a special 'VIP ticket' package retailing for \$150 that bundled together priority entrance, VIP seating, and a "special goodbye" with the artists after the concert.

⁹⁸ Anime Expo is an anime convention (currently the largest in North America), held annually in Los Angeles, California. First held in 1992, it typically features a large number of invited special guests from Japan.

And yet, as we will go on to see, Kajiura's ability to drive both financial return and awareness for her music would remain fundamentally limited under her role as a composer/producer. For all the success and 'brand name' value she had created for herself utilising anime and videogames as a vehicle for her productions, a greater degree of 'attention' from listeners would dictate a very different kind of vehicle. If the screen we view anime through represents one kind of 'platform' by which individuals can express their creative interests (Hu 2010, 130), we might ask how alternate platforms might allow for potentially more effective means of expression, or at the very least, expression to a wider pool of consumers. In drawing parallels between this screen, and the window of interpretation mentioned by Bolton, I want to suggest that in searching for this platform in relation to the field of audio (as opposed to the visual), the form from which the music issues is crucial to consider.

Part 3 — Going beyond the 'soundtrack' — Examining pop idol group Kalafina as a visual 'front' to Kajiura's music

It is this dimension — a platform for, or objectification of, Kajiura's music — that forms the basis of this final section, as I in turn consider the role of the composer and the flow of music from background to foreground. Here, I will examine the form of the female 'idol group' — as it exists within the wider Japanese music industry — typically defined as an assemblage of media personalities 'in their teens and twenties who are considered particularly attractive and cute' (Xie 2014, 74). Famous idol groups such as AKB48⁹⁹ would make a name for themselves with a string of best-selling singles and an image that 'must be pure but sexy, docile yet energetic, reserved but always cheerful for photos' (The Japan Times 2013). AKB48 would thrive through the institution of a theatre venue in Tokyo's Akihabara district in which they would perform regularly, developing a loyal fanbase who valued the immediate accessibility this venue offered them — fulfilling the group's motto of 'idols that you can meet' (Galbraith & Karlin 2012, 20). With this focus on Akihabara — a district frequented by many of Tokyo's anime fans — the worlds of idol fandom and anime would invariably become intermingled — a 'common entry point' similar to that discussed earlier in relation to the intersecting spheres of anime and videogames. Tapping into this common entry point,

⁹⁹ AKB48 (active 2005-). Often singled out for their particularly close cultivation of a loyal fan following, over 35 of the group's singles have topped Japan's Oricon Weekly Singles Chart. Although originally conceived around 48 core members, as new singers both join and 'graduate' from the group, this has at times come to exceed an overall total 120 (divided amongst smaller 'teams').

and by putting her own spin on the pre-existing formula of female 'idol' groups within the Japanese music market, in 2007 Kajiura would create her own idol group — Kalafina — for whom she would write and produce their output. Originating as part of the anime film compilation series *Garden of Sinners* (itself an adaptation of a novel series), Kalafina would go on to become a highly successful pop group in their own right, making numerous appearances on TBS music show *UTAGE!* and performing at the famed Tokyo Budokan.

At the core of this relationship was an implicit sense that Kalafina acted as a public 'face' for Kajiura's music, an attractively packaged conduit between the background role of the composer/producer, and the consuming public at large. This guise, in combination with the cachet that Kajiura's classical compositional background lent the group, would also allow their music to arguably escape the respective pop-cultural ghettos of 'idol music' and 'anisong', despite their origins within these spheres of interest. Through this clever manipulation of the Japanese pop industry's formulas, which we can read in tandem with a close analysis of Kalafina's career trajectory in relation to Kajiura's own, we gain crucial insight not only to the importance of public image to music's consumption within Japan, but also how the anime industry might continually serve as a kind of generative 'soil' from which diverse outputs might spring from the most formulaic of beginnings.

For Kajiura, this shift into producing for an 'idol group' was not as overtly distinct a move as it might first initially seem. In many ways, Kalafina were merely a continuation of existing working practices and collaborative personnel for Kajiura. Indeed, two of the band's members — Keiko Kubota and Wakana Ootaki — had previously worked with Kajiura as part of her FictionJunction project. To further flesh out the band beyond these two initial members, their record label Sony Music Japan held an audition process which would attract some 30,000 applicants. From these, a further member was selected to join the group, Hikaru Masai (a fourth member, Maya Toyoshima, was also originally chosen, but would leave the group only a year later). Kalafina's existence as a three-piece unit would be a fundamental element in crafting the kind of sound they would become renowned for. While the core ingredients of their musical style would be built on the foundations of Kajiura's previous hallmark mixing of classical and electronic components, what Kalafina immediately lent to this blend was a far more complex layering of vocal elements. This choral dynamic typically saw each member specialising in a particular vocal range within the songs: For Kubota, the lower-range, for Ootaki, the upper-ranger, and for Masai, the mid-range. This identification with specific components of the songs they were singing not only lent the band members individual recognisability to listeners, but perhaps more crucially, made clear that

the members were not interchangeable pop clones: they had been chosen for their vocal talent, and equally, how that talent complemented each-other.

This emphasis on vocal talent cast Kalafina in stark contrast to many of Japan's most famous idol groups. As observed earlier, the primary criteria for female idols was invariably 'cuteness', as opposed to singing ability. On the male end of the spectrum, the inability by the members of the four-piece male outfit SMAP¹⁰⁰ to harmonise well was so renowned that it became a kind of quasi-celebrated trope amongst their fanbase (Darling-Wolf 2004, 358). In Kalafina's case, the selection of singers that were highly proficient at singing also clearly bore relevance to Kajiura's own composition process for their songs. Stating that 'it is very important for me to know who will be singing the songs I compose' (Toole 2016), this 'envisioned' singer or embodied form for the songs she is creating would set Kajiura in stark contrast to the success of a composer/producer like Tetsuya Komuro, where a kind of everyman 'singability' was a far more pressing concern. In Komuro's formula of pop music, if Japanese up and down the country could render their own passable rendition of a hit single during a karaoke performance, it was a job well done. Instead, with Kajiura's material for Kalafina — primed for their operatic voices and carefully honed harmonies — simple imitation on the part of amateur fans was a far more difficult concern. Indeed, for Kajiura, the singer seemed to be of equal, if not even higher value, than the song itself.

And yet, while it is important to acknowledge the band members' musical talent (as it exists, above and beyond the norm for Japanese idol groups), the presentation of — or in a more cynical sense, the marketing of — the group feels broadly aligned with the sense that image is still very important indeed. There is the distinct sense that in fulfilling an expectation that 'female Japanese idols represent the perfect female form in Japanese society' (Xie 2014, 77), Kalafina are designed to appear in one particular form (an idealised, attractive one) as opposed to another. To an extent that we might 'interpret' this expectation in relation to Kalafina, it is useful to look to the band's numerous music videos. Many present them in a glamorous, sensual manner — with fast-paced editing, dark colours, short skirts and running their hands down their bodies (*Blaze*, *One Light*, *Progressive*) — others are more neutral in tone, with light, pastel tones, slower editing and white, bridal gown-esque outfits (*Kagayaku Sora No Shijima Ni Wa [In the Silence of the Shining Sky]*, *Into the World*, *Ring Your Bell*). In both cases the physical bodies of the members are understandably placed front and centre,

¹⁰⁰ SMAP (active 1988-2016). Male idol group who would go on to become the most successful boy band in Japanese history, as well as experiencing vast popularity through Asia. Releasing 55 singles over the course of their career, the group would finally disband in 2016.

the aesthetic of beauty mapped out via the focused lens of the camera telling us exactly where and how we should be looking at them.

Patrick Galbraith — who defines the ‘idol’ as a ‘highly produced and promoted performer’ — discusses how this aesthetic originated within the Japanese music industry in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with top pop celebrities like the singer Seiko Matsuda (often described as the ‘Madonna’ of Japan) building large fanbases enraptured with their public image. This particular model for musical stars would become further idealised by ‘anime idols’ like the character Lynn Minmay, whose image and music became a core part of the appeal for the science-fiction series *Macross*. In this way, the fields of anime and idols would become entangled in a tight embrace, further crystalising both a particular aesthetic for idols, but also cross-pollinating a certain set of characteristics which fans would demand from their fantasies. In both instances, Galbraith sees the idol as a figure fundamentally wrapped up in fulfilling the ‘promises’ of ideldom (Galbraith 2019, 207-208) — they are willingly accepted, celebrated even, as an impossible fiction. Idols are, in essence, a kind of ‘better’ product precisely because they have been artificially tailored and produced to meet predefined parameters.

Kalafina’s image can also be considered in tandem with the earlier narratives of globalisation and an international platform for Kajiura’s music. Here, Kalafina act as the idealised means to ‘turn manga/anime fans into “Japan Fans”’ — occupying an intermediary role between the anime their songs feature in, and a broader representative role in which Cool Japan sells not only fantastical anime, but the ‘fantasy of cute girls’. In Galbraith’s model, the two ultimately become an interchangeable drive for ‘otaku’ (geek) audiences, as an attraction to cute girls and an attraction to Japan converge (Galbraith 2019, 228-229). For some, this will be the two-dimensional ‘*bishōjo*’ (beautiful young girls) of the anime and game worlds themselves, for others, it will be fully three-dimensional idols such as Kalafina. In the eyes of the Japanese politicians shaping the Cool Japan strategy in which the country’s cultural soft power is one of its finest assets, there is not only a financial incentive to this — selling more CDs and anime merchandise — but a sense of selling ‘Japan’ itself, a nation of beautiful women, fully capable of ‘winning hearts and minds’ (Galbraith 2019, 228).

The way Kalafina interact with these tropes is important because it fundamentally influences to what degree they must shift (or are able to shift) their form in order to meet audience expectations. Galbraith draws on the work of Stuart Hall to expand on what he calls the ‘process approach to popular culture’, in particular relation to the ‘domain of cultural forms’ (Hall 1998, 449-50, cited in Galbraith 2019, 232). This domain is one characterised by a

constant jostling between ‘dominant and subordinate formations’, which form part of a process ‘by which some things are actively preferred so that others can be dethroned’. National popular cultures – i.e. a ‘Japanese popular culture’ — enter into a battlefield where precisely because there is ‘no fixed content to the category of ‘popular culture’ the stakes are all the higher (Galbraith 2019, 232-233). Win, and you have the opportunity to move one step higher within the public interest. Lose, and you can be swiftly forgotten or relegated to a small niche. Kalafina are ultimately at the mercy of merely fitting into a formula laid down by countless idols before them. In some aspects, they are able to escape the received formula – i.e. through vocal proficiency. In others — namely, image — they wholly fit the model they are expected to occupy. In this manner, Kalafina add a further dimension to the window analogy put forth by Bolton and Barthes — observing them from a particular angle, they not only appear as an abstract concept in and of themselves, but also reflect the wider landscape around them.

When we listen to a song by Kalafina, we do so in the knowledge that although the track is to all intents and purposes a track by Yuki Kajiura, we are in that instance listening not to the composer *per se*, but to an idol group. Kalafina as a means to attractively ‘front up’ Kajiura’s music represents an interesting spin on what R. Murray Schafer calls ‘schizophonia’, or in other words, ‘splitting the sound from the makers of the sound’ (1969, 46). In this equation, if we see Kajiura as the ‘maker’ of the sound, and Kalafina as a relay of that sound, or an intermediary — between creator and consumer — then their music is indeed schizophrenic, what enters the consumer’s eyes and ears is at a further remove from its original creative origin-point. At the same time, a more generous reading of the equation would put forward that as vocalists, as the literal fleshly ‘embodiment’ of Kajiura’s music, their role in the creation of the music is just as valid as Kajiura’s as titular composer. In this sense, it is not so much that their music is schizophrenic, but rather symbiophonic — two distinct entities, but fundamentally tied together.

Karen Collins sheds further light on how this kind of musical embodiment and symbiosis might work toward a certain formularisation of value creation. Returning to Michel Chion, she cites Chion’s observation of how when a specific sound and visual occur in tandem, they generate a ‘spontaneous and irresistible mental fusion’ (Chion 1994 63, cited in Collins 2013, 20). I read this irresistible mental fusion as something that might not only occur between two distinct audio/visual elements, but potentially many. For example, we might map out the combinatory structure of elements that make up our understanding of, or way of defining, a song released by Kalafina as below:

Kalafina

Kalafina + Yuki Kajura

Kalafina + Yuki Kajura + anime theme song

Kalafina + Yuki Kajura + anime theme song + anime franchise brand name

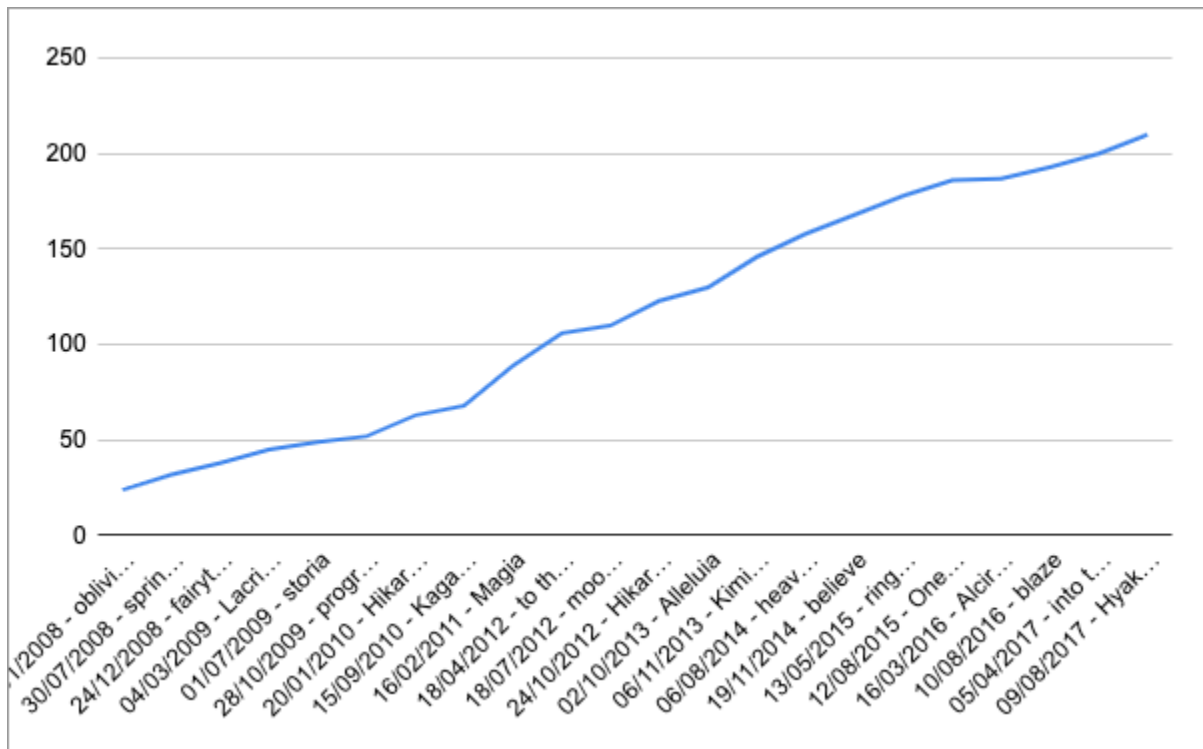
Through the simplified process outlined above, a consumer of Kalafina's music goes through various 'fusions' of informational input that serve, through a multiplication of recognisable elements, to further enhance the value of the song being consumed. Galbraith and Karlin see this kind of fusion as part of a formula of 'reinforcement' inherent in the kinds of media convergence present within the interconnected spheres of Japanese popular culture (Galbraith & Karlin 2016, 8-10). This structure holds some potential danger in creating 'participation gaps' of the kind observed in the previous section where American fans were denied the 'physical' presence of Kajura's 2017 concert due to visa issues, or legal access to her music (before it was later added to services such as iTunes and Spotify). However, Galbraith and Karlin see in the work of Henry Jenkins — who first popularised the idea of convergence within academia — a model for a far more 'enabled' consumer, one that is willing to overstep these obstacles if the above reinforcement model gives them enough incentive to do so. As Jenkins puts it: 'media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want'" (Jenkins 2008, 2).

It is worth noting that while all of Kalafina's music falls within a broad oeuvre of Kajura's typical stylings, there remains capacity for variance 'within' this style. So, while the core make-up of instrumentation, vocal arrangement and melodic structure may remain similar, the tempo and 'atmosphere' of their music can vary considerably. In this way, Kalafina's music can manifest as melancholically gothic (*Lacrimosa*, *Magia*), elegiac and empowering (*To The Beginning*, *Heavenly Blue*), sweepingly downtempo (*Fairytale*) or playful and spirited (*Hikari No Senritsu [Melody of Light]*). Indeed, this tolerance for a degree of variety suggests a particular strength in the formula of Kajura's compositional style, namely, that the elements that make it recognisable are so concrete and ingrained that they can be applied to different use and purpose without losing the overly semblance of a 'Kajura produced song'. In this way, we might envision Kalafina not as a fixed, unfluid group of parameters existing as a subset within Kajura's broader career, but instead as the most opportune tool for her to utilise for the creation of her music at that point of time, a sharper, more finely honed version of what she had previously been experimenting with in the form of her previous group FictionJunction.

In an effort to put the question of the kind of media experiences fans of Kalafina wanted (and how much they wanted them) into a quantifiable manner, perhaps the most objective way of tracking their trajectory as performers within the wider Japanese music industry is to examine their chart performance over the course of their existence. This approach not only takes into account the position each of their singles reached in the Japanese Oricon singles' chart¹⁰¹ (a sign of outright popularity within a given week), but also how many weeks it remained in that chart (a sign of longevity). Similar to how the earlier method of cluster analysis of Kajiura's music by Wang et al. allowed me to visually interpret and affirm the sense that her music feels 'of a type', a close analysis of chart data allows us to feel the rub of the comparative smooth and rough within an artist's career as we run our eyes over numbers that take on the quality of success and failure when seen spread out over a historical time period (in this instance, from 2008 — 2018).

When we listen to a song, we are given many means of interpreting it — we can get a sense of what might have influenced it, how fast or slow it is, whether it is happy or sad. Even whether we like it or not. But only by looking at chart data can we get a true sense of the 'life' of a song in relation to its most important parameter — how listeners reacted to it en masse, and how, in a very real commercial sense, they 'valued' it.

¹⁰¹ Founded in 1967 as Original Confidence Inc., Oricon supplies statistics and chart records from the Japanese music industry, with data drawn from retail outlets across the country and announced every Tuesday.



(Figure 10: X axis = Kalafina's single releases, including release dates. Y axis = Cumulative weeks on the Japanese Oricon singles chart. Each single release adds to the overall cumulative total. By late 2017 Kalafina had spent a total of over 200 weeks in the singles charts. All chart data: <https://www.oricon.co.jp/>)

For Kalafina, the picture is for the most part one of remarkable consistency — a sign no doubt of what would become a remarkably devoted fanbase, but also the fact that nearly every one of their singles was attached to an anime project as a tie-up release (something highly common within the Japanese music industry). With one exception (noted below), the band's twenty-two singles charted between #4 and #15 in the Oricon charts and spent on average nine weeks within the chart. The band's debut single, *Oblivious* — taken from the soundtrack of the first of the *Garden of Sinners* films — was also one of their most successful, not only indicating the power of the tie-up release model in helping boost single sales, but also the impact Kalafina's sound had from the very beginning of their career. The group did not need time to 'get up to speed', but instead hit the ground running, with *Oblivious* peaking at #8 and remaining in the Oricon charts for 24 weeks. This longevity and consistency within Japan's pop charts is worth further discussion in the context that it is precisely these qualities that best allow for the formation of that key metric — familiarity — with audiences. By driving toward habits of consumption — in which each new single release allows fans to achieve a kind of further 'closeness' to the group in question via the purchasing and consumption of said release — establishing a rhythm and volume of 'output' in the manner highlighted above forms a core strategy of value creation, in both a

commercial and connective sense. The format of the idol group, I suggest, epitomises this strategy — in which the instance of the ‘single release’ as a moment of connection between singers and listeners acts as a kind of auditory glue, linking together in that moment both the fans and the members of the group themselves, the familial pleasure of which then serves as the impulse and drive for subsequent releases.

In this respect, I want to draw a parallel with another female three-piece Japanese idol group, Perfume. Operating continuously from 2000 to the present day, but reaching mass popularity in 2007 with the release of the single *Polyrhythm*¹⁰² and its accompanying album *GAME*, Perfume have become one of the most beloved of all Japanese pop groups — from 2008 onwards, every one of their singles has charted in the Top 4 of the Oricon charts, and sold over 50,000 copies. As with Kalafina, Perfume’s success has been defined by a long-running collaborative relationship with a single producer, and in Patrick St. Michel’s book-length study of the band’s album *GAME*, we see clear value accorded to the role of that individual, electronic-dance-music prodigy Yasutaka Nakata.¹⁰³ Nakata’s productions for the group are presented as ‘intelligent’, the rhythms of Perfume’s music are ‘difficult’ and ‘complicated’, and yet grounded in a clear pop sensibility (Michel 2018). In this acclaim, there is an acknowledgement that Nakata’s input is a kind of ‘production’, but that this does not inherently lead to the inherent ‘plasticity’ occupied by other idol groups such as AKB48. Craig sees this factor — of what marks out and calls attention to a given performer within a crowded pop marketplace — as ‘musical sophistication’, something that is in the hands of songwriters and lyricists to hone and improve (Craig 2000, 79). In moving beyond the ‘ghetto’ of anime fandom, Kalafina — in much the same manner as Perfume’s success with a broader mainstream audience — have found themselves appearing on television shows such as TBS’s (Tokyo Broadcasting System) *UTAGE!*. The format of *UTAGE!* sees established pop singers covering ‘classic’ songs, and in the case of Kalafina, this took the form of the band turning in their own renditions of Enka — a form of popular song and typically popular with an older demographic and suffused with a longing for the ‘good old days’ (Shamoon 2014, 136). By utilising platforms such as *UTAGE!*, Kalafina were able to swell their audience beyond a pre-existing market of ‘anime music fans’ to such an extent

¹⁰² Perfume’s single *Polyrhythm* would be notable in its inclusion on the soundtrack of Disney/Pixar’s animated film *Cars 2* (2011), four years after the song’s original Japanese release.

¹⁰³ Yasutaka Nakata (1980-). Japanese DJ and songwriter famed as the producer for both Perfume and model-turned-singer Kyary Pamyu Pamyu. He has also collaborated with or remixed non-Japanese artists such as Kylie Minogue and in 2016 contributed a composition to the closing ceremony of the Rio Olympic Games.

that by 2016, the band were capable of playing two dates at Japan's vaunted 14,000 capacity indoor arena, the Budokan.¹⁰⁴

Kalafina's attempts at a broader audience for their (and by extension, Kajiura's) music was not limited to the domestic Japanese market. Like Kajiura, they actively courted an international audience from early in their existence, and in 2011, US anime streaming platform Crunchyroll invited the band to perform at that year's Anime Expo.¹⁰⁵ In contrast with Kajiura's own ventures to the US however, Kalafina's presence there felt far more confined to their role as a mechanistic, produced 'pop group', as opposed to individuals with specific creative agency. An interview with the band at the Expo by Anime News Network sees their answers fall very much within the remit of pop idol-dom. The answers are polite, non-revelatory and largely shallow in content, as the group enthuse about how they are anime fans themselves, and have watched all the series their songs have accompanied. Playing to the crowd, one might say. The most potentially insightful comment comes from Wakana, who answers the question of what it is like to work with Kajiura and what kind of presence she has in the recording studio: 'Ms. Kajiura has a really big world view, and as Kalafina, we have to express that huge world view that she has in her mind. We learn a lot from her, and she's a lot like a teacher for us. But even more than that, she's the most important part of this group' (Manry 2011).

This public acknowledgement of Kajiura's input on the group, her existence as a kind of 'invisible' member of the band itself remains a constant throughout their career. A sign, perhaps, of their indebtedness to her as the progenitor of their success, but also an interesting proffering of Kajiura's name as something that perpetually sits in tandem with the group itself, a kind of analogue to historic producer-artist relationships of the past, such as that between George Martin and the Beatles, or Tony Visconti and David Bowie. What lies at the core of this dynamic is an expressed, verbalised awareness around the concept that the artist's music does not spring fully-formed and complete into the world of its own accord, but does so as the result of specific, formulised creative input. It is not born, but produced.

In January 2017, record label Sony announced that it would be launching a new imprint — SACRA Music — specifically designed for artists like Kalafina (alongside other internationally

¹⁰⁴ Situated in central Tokyo, the Budokan was originally built to house the judo events of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, but has since then also become famous for hosting internationally popular live acts, including — in 1966 — the Beatles, who were the very first rock group to perform there.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/press-release/2011-06-28/crunchyroll-announces-more-guests-to-its-live-streaming-event-at-anime-expo-2011>

popular anisong acts such as LiSA, GARNiDELiA and ClariS) that were popular with a global audience as well as domestically. Intended to be run in tandem with the strategies of Aniplex (which functions both as a record label and a distributor of anime), SACRA Music was touted as a means to facilitate the better participation of its artists in foreign events, live concerts and crucially, the distribution of their music outside of Japan. Indeed, after this announcement was made, many of Kalafina's tracks which had previously been unavailable on international streaming platforms such as Spotify began to appear (Komatsu 2017).

However, while these efforts to make headway internationally would be welcomed by fans around the world eager for more ready access to their music, this 'stretching' of Kalafina's area of operations would come with its own frictions. Chief among these, a sense of diverging narratives that would feel increasingly at odds with each-other. On one hand, Kalafina as domestic, 'populist' success story and a 'serious' recording act, as opposed to internationally, where they were touted specifically as an 'anisong' artist that could be shipped abroad on that remit, and under that guise. The reality of the situation was that although Kalafina had scored the accolade of performing at the Budokan, these appearances — alongside the release of their fifth studio album far on the water — were arguably a high water mark for the group, with the LP narrowly missing out on the top spot, when it came in at number 2 on the Oricon charts on its release in September 2015. From then onward however, a string of single releases between 2016 and 2017 scored middling returns, in particular an ill-fated collaboration with aging singer-songwriter Shinji Tanimura which spent a single week on the Oricon charts at position 37. A sixth Kalafina studio album failed to materialise and by December 2017, rumours of Kajiura's dissatisfaction with her talent agency were circulating. These rumours suggested that following the departure of Kajiura's long-time manager within the agency in June, creative differences had become rife between the composer and the manager's replacement within the agency, leading Kajiura to attempt to renegotiate the rights to her music (Pineda 2018a).

One suggestion is that the consistent, formulaic nature of the band's output — originally a key asset in establishing a recognisable sonic identity for them — was now more of a hindrance than a help. In essence, while the band's music had remained unchanging, consumer tastes had moved on, and predictability had become a detriment to the image it had originally helped shore up. This is born out in the chart data presented above — in the four-year period covering 2010-2014, Kalafina spent a cumulative total of over 100 weeks in the Oricon charts, but in a comparative four-year period from 2014-2018, the band only managed around 50 weeks in the charts. While still clearly successful, the returns were rapidly diminishing — indicating a degree of market fatigue, or dissatisfaction with the output

the band were creating. For whatever reason, the band's music was no longer connecting with audiences in the way it used to.

Having scaled the heights of the Japanese music industry, Kalafina's tale ultimately comes to a rather unceremonious ending. On 21 February 2018 — only a month after Kalafina had celebrated their 10th anniversary with another performance at the Budokan — Kajiura announced via her Twitter account¹⁰⁶ that she would be leaving her talent agency Space Craft Produce. This departure would come in tandem with the closure of her official fanclub, and a set of concert dates, running through the summer months. At the time, Kajiura indicated that the 'status' of Kalafina as a group would inevitably end up changing, but that she held a great deal of respect for the band members and would continue to cheer them on. However, industry commentators swiftly acknowledged that the composer had 'always guided the group's activities' and that they would foreseeably face great difficulties moving ahead without her. At the time of Kajiura's announcement, the group had no publicly scheduled activities (Pineda 2018a).

Space Craft Produce were quick in their attempts to see off any potential anxieties from fans regarding Kalafina, stating that 'performances at our sponsored concerts and the opening of the group's 10th anniversary film are continuing as planned' (Pineda 2018b) and that discussions were already underway as to who would produce the group's songs following the departure of Kajiura. A few days later, a trailer for the band's Kalafina 10th Anniversary Film *~Yume ga Tsunagu Kagayaki no Harmony~* was released, with the release scheduled to screen in Japanese cinemas between 30 March and 12 April (Pineda 2018c). On its release, the film would go on to top mini-theatre¹⁰⁷ box office rankings for the first week of April (Sherman 2018).

At what should have been a celebratory time for the band however, darker rumblings were afoot. In mid-March, Space Craft Produce notified Kalafina's official fan club that one of the band's three members had expressed an interest in leaving the agency, a request that they had subsequently granted. The talent agency outlined that the two remaining members of Kalafina would continue on as a two-piece unit, something cast into immediate doubt by a report in Japanese tabloid paper Sports Hochi that stated the band were planning to announce their break-up at the end of the month. These rumours were further fanned when Keiko Kubota filed a trademark for the Kalafina name (Pineda 2018d).

¹⁰⁶ <https://twitter.com/Fion0806/status/966190960135868416>

¹⁰⁷ In Japan, mini-theatres are — in contrast to large-scale multiplexes — a kind of small capacity independent movie venue not under the direct influence of any of the country's major film companies.

While the report regarding the group's imminent break-up ultimately proved to be premature, the identity of the group member planning to leave the talent agency was confirmed when on 13 April, Keiko Kubota announced via Kalafina's official website¹⁰⁸ that she would be leaving the band with immediate effect. Seven months later, Hikaru Masai would follow Kubota in announcing her official departure from Space Craft Produce (Pineda 2018e). Although the announcement did not at this point indicate she would be leaving Kalafina too, with band member Wakana Ootaki at this point now the only individual remaining with the talent agency, the capacity of Kalafina to continue as a functioning entity was cast in serious doubt.

On 13 March 2019, the seemingly inevitable was finally confirmed. Space Craft Produce announced via their official website that Kalafina would be disbanding, and further noted that the group had been virtually inactive since the departure of Kajiura as producer the previous year (Sherman 2019). Having examined potential scenarios that would allow the group to continue, none were deemed viable as options to allow them to resume their activities. This would seem to testify to the fact that Kajiura was in essence the glue binding the band together, and once removed, the band were essentially existing on borrowed time.

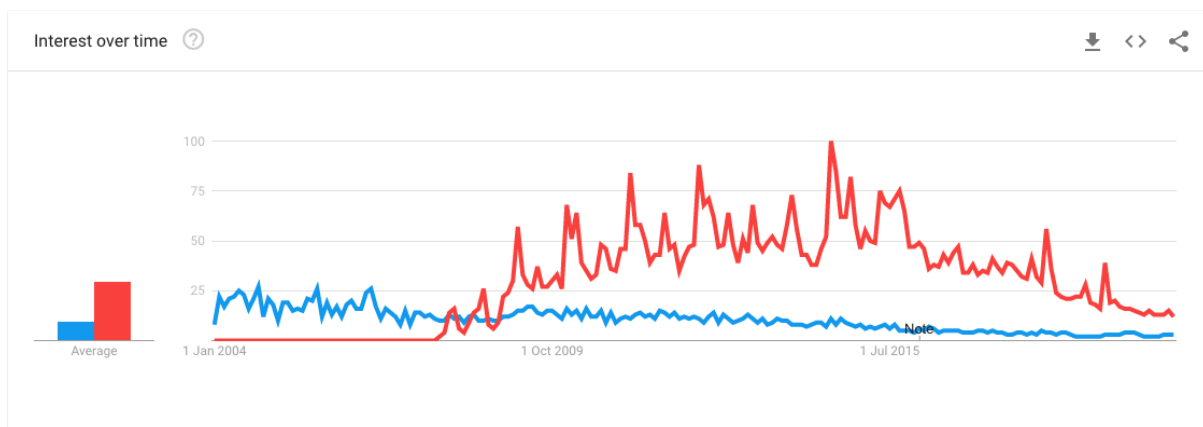
For a year, Kalafina had essentially been operating in limbo — a victim, perhaps, of the behind-the-scenes intricacies of the Japanese music industry. For the band members however, this ending also acted as a kind of new beginning, with Wakana Ootani the first to spread her wings independently, with a run of solo concert dates before the demise of Kalafina had even been officially confirmed. Hikaru Masai would follow in launching a solo career under the stage-name H-el-ical//, providing the opening theme song for the anime *Gleipnir* (2020)

For Keiko Kubota, the first to leave the group, fans would have to wait until 15 April 2020 to hear that the singer would be resuming her career with a solo album from Avex Trax, an imprint of the larger Avex Group which had famously been driven to such success by Tetsuya Komuro in the early 1990s. Ironically, Avex Trax had become renowned as something of a 'house of refuge' for artists whose contracts with their former labels had ended (or who had become discontent with them). This had seen them attracting a number of acclaimed figures within the Japanese music industry such as female pop icons Namie

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.kalafina.jp/info/archive/?493665>

Amuro¹⁰⁹ and Ayumi Hamasaki,¹¹⁰ as well as famed visual kei rocker Gackt¹¹¹ as well as groups such as Wagakki Band,¹¹² who would come to fame blending traditional Japanese instrumentation with frenetic pop melodies. For Kubota, the move to Avex Trax would definitely seem to be a kind of musical ‘re-birth’, following the demise of Kalafina, with two lead tracks from her forthcoming album bearing the titles ‘Inochi no Hana’ (Flower of Life) and ‘Be Yourself’ (Pineda 2020).

Looking retrospectively back across the entirety of Kalafina’s career, running in tandem with Kajiura’s, the merits represented by the band as a platform for her music are clear. The operation of an attractive idol group in the pop realm are inherently predisposed to offer greater public visibility than a ‘behind the scenes’ composer/producer. This is clearly highlighted in the below figure, which measures the volume of Google searches over a period of time to gauge comparative ‘interest’ in two keywords, in this instance ‘Yuki Kajiura’ and ‘Kalafina’.



(Figure 11: Interest over time, 2004-present. Blue line = Yuki Kajiura. Red line = Kalafina.¹¹³)

For Kajiura herself, we see an initial strength in interest around the mid 2000s, representing the immense popularity for the high volume of soundtracks for anime and videogames she

¹⁰⁹ Further discussion of Namie Amuro, in particular her links to producer/composer Tetsuya Komuro and his label — Avex — can be found in Chapter 2.

¹¹⁰ Ayumi Hamasaki (1978-). With over 50 million records sold, Hamasaki is credited as being the best-selling Japanese solo artist of all time, and was dubbed the ‘Empress of J-pop’ at the peak of her career.

¹¹¹ Gackt, also known as Ōshiro Gakuto (1973-). Famed as the frontman for rock group Malice Mizer, before beginning his solo career in 1999. Holds the record as the male solo artist with the most consecutive top ten singles in Japan.

¹¹² Wagakki Band (active 2013-). Eight-piece band famed for playing energetic rock music with traditional Japanese instruments. The band’s aesthetic has earned them a strong crossover fanbase within the worlds of gaming and anime.

¹¹³ <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=yuki%20kajiura,kalafina>

was creating during this period (ten individual projects within 2004-2006 alone). This interest then begins a slow, gradual fall that continues to the present day. Simultaneously, we see a rapid rise in interest for Kalafina from their creation in 2007, swiftly overtaking interest in Kajiura herself. Interest in the group broadly peaks in the years between 2010 and 2013, before tailing off — this shows a high degree of correlation with the trajectory of the band's chart success observed earlier. This figure is also important to consider because it is based on data drawn from worldwide Google searches, not only those limited to Japan — indicating that not only were Kalafina an effective means of projecting Kajiura's music to a wider audience in general, but that they did so *globally*.

In presenting a clear chronology of Kalafina's career and exposing it to a close analysis from the point of view of both the band's image as an idol group, as well as how this would correspond with both domestic and international success, I have sought to solidify an understanding of exactly what kind of value the band offered as a 'platform' for Kajiura's music. In understanding the various formula that collectively make up what an audience perceives as an 'idol group', Kajiura was able to present Kalafina as an attractive public 'face' for her music, and reap the rewards of increased chart success and attention for her music in a way she had never previously been able to in her guise as 'merely' a composer. Although still 'behind the scenes' as the producer of Kalafina's material, her music was centre-stage within the pop industry as never before.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to highlight how we might situate the music of composer Yuki Kajiura as ideally placed to facilitate a commentary on many of the formulae at work within the field of anime music in the 21st century as well as the wider sphere of Japanese pop culture and its capacity to flow internationally.

Beginning with a chronological biographical survey of Kajiura's career as well as a close interpretive analysis of her compositional style and interviews in which she discusses her music, I have aimed to present a series of 'causal links' that present an iterative series of components that come together to create what we understand as the broad 'form' of a typical Kajiura production. These components or tropes, including but not limited to the use of alternate languages in her material, her fluidity in creating both background music and vocal led 'songs' and a consistent sonic palette all lead to a sense of familiarity and recognisability for listeners to her music.

Kajiura's activities within a 'common entry point' between anime and videogames would, in conjunction with the rise of faster internet connections, see her music travel internationally and become popular amongst those with an expressed interest in Japanese pop-cultural content. A rapidly swelling Anglophone fanbase for her music and their use of message boards and file-sharing services to both consume and discuss Kajiura's music highlights how the digital 'format' of music holds clear value in projecting a creator's produce beyond domestic borders, even when bodily, they cannot always necessarily follow. With this pre-established international fanbase in place, the stage was set for a more concerted 'official' outreach campaign from Kajiura's Japanese distributors to follow once the financial merits of doing so became self-evident.

Toward an end of reaching a further audience for her music, Kajiura's establishment in 2007 of the idol group Kalafina allows us to consider the vital role public image plays in the consumption of music. By presenting her music through the guise of three attractive female singers, Kajiura's music was separated from its immediate origin point in her role as a composer/producer. The benefit of this would be a consistent decade of strong chart success for the band's singles, and exposure on a national level via TV coverage and performances at Japan's acclaimed Budokan venue. As a 'mini' case-study within our larger case-study of Kajiura's career, by looking at Kalafina and their own response to the formulae of the Japanese pop industry, we are given insight into the ways in which the dominance of certain aesthetic preferences inherently dictated how they presented themselves to listeners. The group's trajectory is ultimately one tied in a symbiotic relationship with Kajiura herself — while Kalafina's 'form' as pop idols enabled them in ways Kajiura herself could not achieve, without Kajiura's creative input, their ability to operate was ultimately severely hampered to such an extent that they no longer became viable as a recording outfit.

In concluding, I would suggest that the constant and recurring theme of familiarity and recognisability present in Kajiura's music and that of Kalafina remains, in itself, the defining 'formula' of her career. Concepts of form, format and formula are important because — as Bolton's model of interpretation allows us to see — they provide a framework for how we understand the media we consume. They are what separate and elevate 'music' from 'sound', informing our listening process and imbuing it with meaning. Whether we bring with us visions of a fantasy world conjured up by the anime series the music accompanies, or dreams of glossy, idealised perfection based on the singers of the music, each informs our listening experience differently. By moving fluidly between these distinct but connected realms, Yuki Kajiura has ensured that while the familiarity of her music remains a core

constant, the number of distinct forms it can take on its various pathways to its listeners are potentially far more diverse.

Chapter 5: Strategies in global appeal — Hiroyuki Sawano and the opening of anisong to the world

Introduction

In concluding *Anime: A History*, Jonathan Clements characterises the 2000s as ‘the end of anime’s first century’, the closing of one chapter, of sorts, but also the beginning of a new one. The story so far has been defined by radical transformation of a multitude of kinds, taking in not only technological changes to both the production and consumption of anime, but also in the ‘aims of creators, and... expectations of audiences’ (Clements 2013, 213). These changes, or response to crises, he argues, have ultimately come to ‘create’ anime as we understand it today. Facing the decade ahead, the anime industry’s chief ‘modern dilemma’ comes via the looming presence of ‘foreign access’, whether we are to see this as ‘opportunity or threat’, and to what degree this will factor into the ‘value’ of anime (Clements 2013, 213). In framing this dilemma as specifically related to ‘access’, as opposed to simply ‘involvement’, we can read Clements’ characterisation of what is essentially a ‘Japanese’ industry with the sense that what may exist in the years to come will to some extent be permanently ‘unlocked’ by the entering of foreign parties, in a manner fundamentally different to previous transformations. In this sense, it is not so much the ‘value’ of anime that is in question, but whether what we attribute this value to in the future can still be envisioned as part of the same creative lineage of the past century. Will it belong to merely a new chapter, or another book entirely?

One of the most tangible forms of ‘foreign access’, of the kind observed by Clements, comes in the changing manner by which viewers have consumed anime. While anime fans outside of Japan in the 1990s and early 2000s had to content themselves with first VHS and then DVD releases of material that had often first aired in Japan months if not years ago, the rapid popularisation of digital streaming services such as Crunchyroll — an online video platform in the vein of Netflix, but dedicated to anime content — in the early 2010s would revolutionise international consumption of the medium. Fans around the world were now able to watch their favourite anime shows legally, often within hours of its original broadcast on Japanese television. This digital shift would see overseas revenues for the anime industry blossom from around 22% in 2010 to nearly 50% in 2017 (Monma, 2019).

At face value, this would suggest that the ‘opportunity/threat’ dilemma falls firmly in the camp of opportunity in respect to the advantages foreign access can bring to the anime industry. However, this topline measure masks a deeper issue — that all components of the anime industry do not necessarily move at the same rate. While some doors have opened to allow ‘access’, others are still in the process of (slowly) opening, while others have not opened at all. In an attempt to illustrate the tensions present in these kinds of mismatch in the pace of change, this chapter looks to the role of music within anime and how the kind of ‘unlocking’ posed by digital-driven access (both within Japan and abroad) can instead problematise precisely this kind of ‘opportunity/threat’ dilemma. For a Japanese music industry that has remained defined by its reliance on CD releases long after many other countries have shifted to both digital downloads and then streaming, the strategies toward distribution taken by record labels within the wider makeup of anime industry production committees offers a powerful narrative in the reluctance to relinquish ‘packaged goods’ as a core component of anime’s value make-up.

Working toward a case study that best illustrates both this phenomenon of change (the shift toward foreign and/or digital access to anime music) and the historical context in which it occurs contains additional complexities, the closer to the present day it takes as its scope. As opposed to attempting to offer a holistic view of the industry and its structures as a whole, it is helpful, rather, to ‘embed’ a more specific focus or ‘unit of analysis’ (Yin 2017, 50). Just as one piece of a puzzle does not contain the whole picture, its shape nevertheless gives us clues as to how the complete entity might be formed together. To that end, this chapter takes as its focus a case study of the composer Hiroyuki Sawano — famed for his soundtracks to popular anime series such as *Attack on Titan* (2013-2021)¹¹⁴ — to illustrate how the 2010s would mark a kind of ‘moment of revelation’ for the Japanese music industry in terms of its relation to both animated content and the international marketplace for it. Tracing out responses to changes in both distribution and consumption of music, I would suggest that the apparent freedoms of these new, digitally enabled marketplaces have ultimately led to a doubling down in structured, systemised approaches to music-making that seek to ‘arouse’ anime fans both in Japan and internationally like never before.

In bringing a history of anime music — and the role of composers within it — into the present day, I offer a picture of a series of commingled producer/consumer dynamics more

¹¹⁴ *Attack on Titan* (*Shingeki no Kyojin*) aired 2013-2021, firstly on MBS for its initial 37 episodes, before moving to NHK. In a world where the remnants of humanity have been reduced to living in walled cities, the titular gigantic ‘Titans’ appear without warning, devouring all in their path. The show’s heroes, determined to survive against the odds, stage a desperate fight back against these monsters.

interconnected and interrelated than ever before. Not limited purely to Japan, nor to distribution models that have defined its music industry for decades, we instead are presented with a framework in which external impetus — of the kind represented by international streaming companies — have forced both audio and visual to adapt to new means and methods of consumption. Within these flows of value, the composer stands as only one person within industries employing thousands, and yet ultimately, they remain the contact point between the genesis of the value object — their music — and its destination, the listener. As the kinds of journey enacted between these two points morph and change, it is to strategy — the route map that gives structure to these paths — that we must turn in our search for the persistence in value in music's application to anime amidst rapidly changing times.

Japan's music marketplace — The 2010s as a tipping point?

Commenting on the nature of the Japanese music market as the second-largest in the world, Noriko Manabe notes with some surprise that there are conversely comparatively few English language studies on its structure and make-up (Manabe 2008, 82). Focusing as it does on the impact of technological change, collaboration between industries and the role of marketing within the country's music market, Manabe's emphasis on structure is an important one, and speaks to a need to conceptualise both its component parts and how they conjoin together to drive value. Part of the attraction of the Japanese music market as a target for research is what sets it at odds and marks it apart from other markets around the world, and perhaps even more crucially, why these divergences continue to persist. One of the most prominent examples lies in the fact that, in 2019, 70% of recorded music sales in Japan still came via CD sales (Ando 2020), in stark contrast to the US where CD sales have fallen by 80% in the last decade (Savage 2019). Why has the Japanese music market proven so resistant to globally popular streaming services such as Spotify, which, for many music lovers around the world, has consigned 'inconvenient' physical formats to the history books? This section, attempting to serve by way of a background glimpse of the Japanese music market, aims to capture a 'status quo' snapshot of many of the practises that still characterise the Japanese music industry in the 2010s while also suggesting that from the middle of the decade onward, Japan would gradually begin to move closer to the new global norms of digital consumption. Here, I will suggest that the success of international streaming platforms such as Crunchyroll form part of what can be observed as trends in media convergence, in which the practices of the visual medium have bled into that of the auditory, and vice versa, just as those of the world have fed into Japan.

In 2019, the Japanese music market generated the equivalent of \$1.37bn in CD sales (Ingham 2020), a testament to the physical format's staying power in the market. It should be noted that CD prices in Japan have historically remained steady around the 3000 yen mark per CD (around £21/\$28, as of January 2021). At about double the typical UK/US CD price, this proposition of the physical format as a 'premium' product, which one might only be willing to invest in for the most favoured of artists, goes a long way to explaining the culture of CD rental shops which dominated Japan in the 1990s, where consumers could instead opt for a 300-350 yen 'test listening' as opposed to shelling out the full price to own the CD outright (De Launey 1995, 215). This culture also lays the groundwork for the understanding of a broader industrial mindset in which the fear of undermining a high purchase price was, and would remain, a defining worry for Japanese record labels.

It is therefore easy to see why the Japanese music industry would remain protective of its entrenched released strategies, or moreover, why it would be *able* in the first place to cling to these structures when beyond its shores, much has since changed. Portraits of Japan in the mid 1990s painted a picture of an extraordinarily domestic-orientated musical climate — despite being at that point the second-largest music market in the world (behind only the US), music of international origin equated to only 25.2% of total sales in 1991 (De Launey 1995, 204). By 2018 this proportion had fallen even lower, to a mere 10.4% (Ingham 2019). It is this extreme emphasis on locality that the production and consumption of anime music within Japan can be seen as a component of — a dynamic also defined by the industry's reliance on the concept of 'tie-ups', songs attached to TV dramas, anime, films and commercials. This marketing tactic was so entrenched that in weeks such as that of 27 September 1993, twenty-six of the top thirty singles in the Japanese charts were tie-ups (De Launey 1995, 218). This model — reaching its apotheosis in the mid-1990s, the golden era of the CD format, thus represents a status quo to which any digital intrusion might be viewed from a standpoint of disruption.

The value-loss represented by the threat of digital piracy, for example, has remained a constant narrative within the history of the Japanese music industry, best characterised in studies by Condry (2004) and Tanaka (2004). The fear of revenue cannibalisation represented by illegal file sharing would ultimately spread osmosis-like into legal avenues of digital distribution too. Manabe is vocal in noting that in spite of Apple's iTunes becoming the top music download platform in Japan in 2006, Sony and Warner's Japanese artists were notably absent, with a number of smaller domestic labels also waiting for these major players to 'take the lead' in terms of what stance they should adopt toward Apple (Manabe 2008, 100). Japan's reticence in shifting from a primarily physical music market to a digital

one is ironic, because in some ways, they led the charge in the adoption of internet-enabled music consumption, with rapid uptake of mobile phone ringtones (derived from pop songs) in the early to mid 2000s, with music accounting for half of all mobile content revenues before 2005 (Manabe 2008, 82). However, it is worth noting that this uptake of ‘mobile music’ masked great degrees of territorialism between Japan’s competing music companies, with Sony Music — Japan’s biggest record label — refusing to sanction the sale of ringtones of their music outside of their own self-operated online portals, as late as 2006 (Manabe 2008, 90). This reluctance on Sony’s part however, as I will explore later in this chapter, would undergo a dramatic reversal in the subsequent decade.

Anime has long had an important role to play in Japan’s music market, not only in the aforementioned predominance of tie-in themes represented by the opening and ending themes that bookend its televised outings, but also in the comprehensive dovetailing of the corporate structures that serve to synchronise marketing activities between the two industries — anime and music. A key example of this would be Aniplex, established in September 1995 as a joint venture between Sony Pictures Entertainment Japan and Sony Music Entertainment Japan. Involved in the planning, production and distribution of anime series — invariably drawing on Aniplex-signed musical artists to soundtrack its visual output — the company stands as a stellar representation of Japan’s media mix marketing strategies. In Thomas Lamarre’s *The Anime Ecology*, he draws on the term ‘ecology’ to envision a new way of approaching precisely this kind of multimedia franchise model present in Japan — going beyond the ‘media mix’ captured by Steinberg (2012) in which elements work in tandem (as evidenced in the reliance on tie-ups emphasised above), to a more ‘polarized’ infrastructure in which sites of encounter between media components charge the flows of energy that characterise the passage of media content through this sort of system (Lamarre 2018, 26).

Lamarre’s conceptualisation of the anime ecology can be read in the broader context of the impact of technological change on the anime industry, namely, in the way digital streaming platforms have fundamentally altered how viewers — both in Japan and internationally — can access anime content. For Lamarre, this emphasis on the role of the infrastructures of technologically-enabled viewing ‘platforms’ suggests a number of important dimensions. Firstly, that these platforms depend on a logistical ‘point-to-point’ operative system in which we might envision the flow of content from creators to consumers (Lamarre 2018, 124). Secondly, we are able to consider online platforms as fundamentally ‘social technology’, because they are predisposed toward viewer comprehension of a wider viewing public beyond themselves. For Lamarre, anime ‘is able to serve as a communicator or mediator

across a range of media forms (not only manga but also light novels, toys, and games, to name some major sources) because it comes to embody the distributive capacity of television' (Lamarre 2018, 244).

To this list of media forms, we might also reasonably add music, and ask — given the international platform provided by digital distribution methods, how this adds to or problematises our understanding of this operative system? The concept of the wider anime ecology (extending to include elements such as music) is particularly useful in framing the situation around international availability because here — if the international availability of anime music is not rolled out 'in tandem' with the visual contents it accompanies — the ecology is essentially incomplete. Moreover, it is 'visibly' incomplete, precisely because the newfound ease of access to the visual element enabled by services such as Crunchyroll throws the comparative lack of access to the accompanying media (i.e. music) as standalone items via services such as iTunes or Spotify into starker contrast. Day-and-date streaming offers overseas fans a partial parity with Japanese fans, but this occupation of the same breadth of temporal viewing space does not necessarily co-exist with depth in terms of the range of associated media (also encompassing physical merchandise, live events and so on). The transition from physical to digital, and from domestic consumption to global, can also be problematised in considering that even if the lost revenue in falling physical sales of anime on home video in Japan — falling 16.5% in 2018 (Hodgkins 2019a) — was wholly compensated in a comparative rise in digital and/or foreign sales, the 'value' represented post-transition will represent a different kind of consumption experience. Hearing a song via a free Spotify stream in the US, as opposed to making the decision to purchase a 3000 yen CD in Japan may arguably offer a tangentially similar listening experience, but the emotional investment represented by an intangible stream offered up on a digital subscription service may ultimately be very different.

If Crunchyroll can be seen as one of the nexus points in the conversation driving anime toward a digital, international audience, it would be remiss to not also mention YouTube. Google's streaming platform, and its dominance as a format for interacting with anime music — both in terms of offering the listening experience itself, but also in allowing fans from around the world to comment publicly on said music — is fundamental to the overall narrative of digitally-enabled access in the 2010s. This, in a way, holds some irony — YouTube is, or was for much of its early existence, known primarily as a video sharing platform, whereas it is to iTunes or Spotify that we might first look when discussing digital music portals. However, due to YouTube's grey zone of operability regarding illegally uploaded material — which is often only removed if flagged by rights holders — it has

remained a strange bedfellow to the increasingly small proportion of music (much of it international in origin) that — due to the lack of formal licensing agreements — is not available legally in all territories via 'official' channels such as the aforementioned iTunes and Spotify. YouTube's very public emphasis on 'view count' adds a further dimension to this equation — the legal distributors of anime and its accompanying music need only look to a video boasting millions of 'views' on YouTube to see how popular a given piece of content is. While it might be said that every one of these views is a 'lost' effort on persuading the viewer to go via legal routes, this is of course problematised if said legal route is not available. Therefore, as Condry notes, 'anime thus provides another example of how permitting some copyright infringement has not caused the 'fall of the anime industry', but may well have contributed to its worldwide popularity' (Condry 2004, 355).

YouTube's bringing together of the auditory and visual within a single 'player' also bears relevance to wider discussions of anime (and anime music) and its role in relation to theories of media convergence. As Condry goes on to state, 'Music is one of the key battlegrounds for power in the media, in part because what happens with the music businesses is likely to influence other publishing and entertainment industries' (Condry, 2004, 344). To this, we might add that the converse can also happen, and that the proven success of Crunchyroll for the distribution of anime internationally stands as a case study for Japan's record labels (already deeply enmeshed with the anime industry by way of 'media mix' marketing strategies) that what can happen in the visual dimension is highly likely to happen in the auditory realm too. Just as how in the mid 2000s record labels like Sony would keep their music shut away within tightly controlled 'walled gardens', so too in the 2010s would Japanese labels prove hesitant in licensing their content to streaming services like Spotify — with many tracks from popular artists conspicuously absent from the platforms either globally, or perhaps even more frustratingly, limited to listeners in Japan only.

The tension and crisis in the Japanese music industry represented by this kind of digital reticence is particularly pronounced because the labels can, in essence, already see the end result: what has happened elsewhere in the world — namely, a wholesale erosion of the revenue represented by physical releases. Operating in a kind of time lag, where its current state represents perhaps where the UK and US were 10-15 years ago, the spectre of 'no going back' presents an almost irresistible draw to keep the door to increased digital access firmly closed. While incentivisation such as the inclusion of unique codes to allow fans to enter exclusive sales for concert events and meet-and-greets with artists has long kept Japanese CD sales on life support, the sense is that the slow, gradual slide toward digital is well under way. In 2019, Spotify recorded 33.8% year-on-year growth in revenue generation

in Japan (Ingham 2019), and it is this sign of inevitability, more than anything, that has forced Japanese labels to see international availability as a saving grace to the digital transition. Namely, if digital access is to be reluctantly enabled, it may then as well encompass the widest possible pool of consumers, and thus the widest possible revenue. While physical releases and the accompanying marketing techniques associated with them presuppose a domestic audience, digital availability is — if labels choose to make it so — border agnostic. If anything, the emphasis then becomes more singularly on the music itself, as opposed to artificial barriers to its consumption.

One artist who emphasises this transition especially well is Hiroyuki Sawano who, from the early 2000s onwards, would become one of the most internationally popular composers of anime music, encompassing both fully orchestrated soundtracks and vocal-led tie-in songs. Sawano's status as a kind of 'all-in-one' figure, illustrative of key trends in both the anime and Japanese music industries allows him and his music to serve as an illustrative example of how particular elements of these industries might function. In this section, I have sought to characterise the state of play of the Japanese music industry in the 2010s, and how, despite it historically standing being very much at odds with the rest of the world in terms of resisting the transition to digital formats of consumption, change has ultimately begun to morph its overall systems and structures all the same. Within this framework of change, we might ask what strategies an individual artist might take in order to maximise their possibilities for success, both domestically and internationally. For this purpose, my next case study on composer Hiroyuki Sawano is particularly useful because it traces out, within this comparatively short time scale, how the trajectory of one artist's career can be taken in parallel to the wider movements of Japan's interconnected 'new media' spheres in general. The subsequent narrative is thus not only that of a single composer, forging a career within the Japanese music industry, but rather the narrative of multiple, connected industries — a constellation of vested interests — moving and responding in tandem to competing demands and use-cases, both domestic and global in origin.

Structures of audio-visual congruence — Eliciting musical 'arousal'

If the 2010s marked — from the record labels and artists' point of view — a shift into a digitally liberated realm for borderless consumption of anime music, would the music itself hold the key in maintaining a sense of creative 'control', aligning audiences, no matter where they lived, toward a consistent, packaged message? To understand why Hiroyuki Sawano's music in particular resonated to such a degree with global audiences, this section presents a

close analysis of a number of his key soundtracks for anime, seeking to identify a defined, systemised sense of musical 'arousal'. Through a number of notable techniques in his compositions, such as a pronounced use of powerfully sung, non-Japanese vocals, as well as pop-song-esque verse/chorus structures, I illustrate how the strikingly 'recognisable' nature of Sawano's output has been central to the popularisation of his music internationally. Drawing on the concepts of affordance theory, which incorporate the notion that the design or perceived affordances of an object inherently suggest to the user how it should be interacted with, my reading of Sawano's music will look to unpack how the emotional 'prompts' captured in its many structural leitmotifs incline listeners to receive it as a 'value-rich ecological object' (Gibson 2014 [1979], 132).

Born in Tokyo in 1980 and having played piano since elementary school, Sawano would go on to study composition, arrangement, orchestration, and piano before beginning his career as a professional composer in 2004. Whereas the composers that formed the basis of my case studies in previous chapters — Tetsuya Komuro, Yoko Kanno and Yuki Kajiura — began their compositional careers working in the fields of pop music or game soundtracks, Sawano is notable in that across the five years from 2006-2010 that marked the formative stages of his professional career, his work was primarily for Japanese TV dramas. As we will go on to explore via a close reading of a number of his key soundtrack works, this early propensity for 'live action' material would inflect his compositions with a dynamism that would become an integral element of his musical toolkit, and often see him compared by fans not with fellow Japanese musical talent, but instead the high-octane style of Hollywood 'star' composers such as Hans Zimmer (*Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Inception*, *The Dark Knight Trilogy*) and his protegee Ramin Djawadi (*Iron Man*, *Game of Thrones*, *Westworld*). With an emphasis on high-paced string sections, rhythmic electric guitar and hefty percussion, Sawano's music would often sound more akin to something heard at a rock concert than a classical music hall.



Figure 12: Hiroyuki Sawano in a promotional image for his 3rd solo album *Remember* (2019).

From an early stage, Sawano's compositions would also affirm another consistent trend in his career — an attachment to long-running or recurring franchises within Japan's wider media mix strategy. One of his defining early soundtracks was for the Fuji TV television drama *Team Medical Dragon* (2006-2010),¹¹⁵ an adaptation of a manga running in the magazine *Big Comic Superior*, while 2010 saw him soundtracking *Marks no Yama*,¹¹⁶ a remake of an acclaimed movie from the 1990s, itself an adaptation of a popular novel. During these years, Sawano would typically create 4-6 soundtracks a year for TV dramas, compared to 2-3 for anime series — indeed, at the start of 2010, the ratio between his non-anime/anime works produced to date was around 3:1. Moving into the subsequent decade however, this ratio would rapidly reverse, with anime material rising to the fore from the start of the decade onward.

By the time of the third series of *Team Medical Dragon* in 2010, Sawano's style was firmly in place, with the track *Tears of the Dragon* almost identical to the kind of frenetic blend of industrial beats and soaring string sections that would define his later works for anime. Most characteristic of all is the explosive introduction of choral elements at a minute and half into

¹¹⁵ *Team Medical Dragon (Iryū)* aired 2006-2010, Fuji TV. The plot centres around skilled surgeon Ryūtarō Asada. Despite being exiled from the medical field, he is subsequently recruited by a professor to work on an experimental new heart procedure whilst simultaneously challenging corruption in the Japanese medical system.

¹¹⁶ *Marks no Yama* aired 2010, WOWOW. A police-procedural drama, the plot follows the investigation into a series of murders tied together by a common cause of death, a gunshot wound through the left eye. A previous film adaptation had been made in 1995, preceded by the original novel by Kaoru Takamura in 1993.

the track's running time, what we will identify here as a typical 'Sawano drop'. This term, appropriated by fans of Sawano's music and the shows they accompany, draws on the broader musical terminology of the 'drop'. Popularised in particular relation to EDM (electronic dance music), the 'drop' refers to the point in a track where a sudden or dramatic change in rhythm occurs, usually preceded by a build-up or pause. An upload of *Tears of the Dragon* on YouTube has to this date attracted over 2 million YouTube views, by far the highest for any of Sawano's compositions from this early stage of his career, testament to fans retroactively seeking out the origins of the sound he would become famed for in subsequent years.

The genesis for the rapid shift in the ratio of compositional output produced for animated series vs. live action dramas can be traced back to Sawano's increasing involvement with a number of long-running anime franchise projects which would generate an audience expectation of sonic consistency as these narratives unfolded over several years' worth of releases. The first of these would come in 2009 with Sawano's soundtrack for *Sengoku Basara: Samurai Kings*¹¹⁷ — an anime adaptation of the popular video game series produced by Capcom. This initial series would be followed swiftly by further efforts in 2009 and 2011. The track *Wild War Dance*, from the third instalment, is particularly striking in sounding more like an uptempo pop-rock track than a traditional 'soundtrack', complete with a powerful English-language female vocal line. In stark contrast to the series itself, which explores the tumultuous times of Japan's feudal era, the track sounds resolutely 'un-Japanese'. This extends to the track *BLAZE*, which lays urban-inflected rap over strings to create a kinetic, heavily rhythmic feel. The anachronistic feel of Sawano's music — soundtracking battling samurai warriors with hip-hop and rock — points to the animated medium as affording Sawano a wide canvas on which to hone the kind of compositional structures he had already begun to display in his material for live action television dramas. Within the larger-than-life world of fantasy-inflected historical drama, Sawano's accordingly bold musical illustration could grow to even greater heights. In 2010, he would be entrusted to soundtrack the latest instalment in one of Japan's most beloved long-running anime science fiction series: *Mobile Suit Gundam*.

For many years, *Mobile Suit Gundam* had operated as a primarily televisual medium — weekly episodes playing out on small screens across Japan, with many of its series running

¹¹⁷ *Sengoku Basara* originated as a series of action-orientated video games based on Japan's historical warring states period, the first instalment of which was released in 2005. The anime adaptation followed in 2009, first broadcast on Chubu-Nippon Broadcasting, and later followed by other networks. A second series aired in 2010, with a film instalment — *The Last Party* — released in 2011.

to up to fifty individual half-hour episodes. While there were film iterations, these were often re-edits of or add-ons to existing made-for-TV material, and as such often had the same 'look and feel' of televised animation. Entering the 2010s, *Gundam's* production studio Sunrise opted for a new approach, tapping into the 'deluxe' nature of the audio-visual fidelity offered by the then-new Blu-Ray disc format to offer a correspondingly 'deluxe' creative project in the form of *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* (2010-2014). Using a pre-existing series of novels as its source material, the animated incarnation was conceived as a direct-to-video project from the off, supplemented by high-profile 'event' screenings and overseas exhibitions (Loo 2009a). A conceived international audience for the project was also built into the physical release of the series: the Blu-Ray discs would come complete with Japanese and English dubbing, as well as Japanese, English, French, Spanish, and Chinese subtitles. The series would also be distributed online via Sony's digital PlayStation store, allowing downloads to its series of games consoles (Loo 2009b). This distributary context is important, not only from a point of view of framing a wide audience for the series, but also to understand the thoroughly 'commercial' setting Sawano's score would need to occupy. While the soundtrack follows closely the auditory model set by previous Sawano efforts such as *Team Medical Dragon* — complete with a typical 'Sawano drop' in the titular track *Unicorn* — it was undoubtedly his most 'polished' effort to date, with a premium feel matching the series' stature. 'Collector's Editions' of the *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* Blu-Rays would even feature live footage of segments of the soundtrack performed in an intimate concert setting, replete with full orchestra and choir.

In his introduction Adorno and Eisler's *Composing for the Films*, McCann outlines a number of key functions for a 'commercial' score, centring on its capacity to encourage identification amongst viewer/listeners. Here, 'emotional proximity' is achieved by way of a 'familiar musical language and an identity of sound and vision' which filters out contradictory elements and projects 'an impression of wholeness' with which the spectator can most readily identify with (Adorno & Eisler 1994, xxxv). The visual component of anime may detail 'what' we see on screen, but it is the music that helps inform 'how' we should feel about it. It is the concept of a defined sonic identity, this notion of 'wholeness', that Sawano's soundtrack for *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* helped the series to achieve — both in its individual direct-to-video releases, and the project as a whole across the four year span it ran for. By tying together releases that often came up to a year apart from one-another under a cohesive 'brand', Sawano's soundtrack can very much be seen as just as essential an ingredient within the overall 'packaging' of the project as any other. To sell *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* to long-running fans as an especially 'high quality' project, it must not only 'look' premium, but also 'sound' premium.

The notion of ‘emotional proximity’ raised above also bears further scrutiny — How might we go about identifying strategies toward achieving this kind of impact within Sawano’s musical output? To this end, the work done by Sasaki et al. (2018) is particularly useful in its focus on the series *Attack On Titan* — the soundtrack for which has not only become the most famous of Sawano’s compositions, but is also arguably the work that firmly established him internationally as one of the most acclaimed composers working within contemporary anime music. In their study, Sawano’s music is identified as following a ‘common structure’ whereby ‘musical sound fades out preceding the most exciting scene... and silence comes for several seconds. Then, a loud solo vocal starts at the beginning of the most exciting scene, and the [musical] accompaniment follows the vocal’ (Sasaki et al. 2018, 325). This technique directly alludes to and codifies the ‘Sawano drop’ referred to earlier. Sasaki et al’s study observes how this technique is utilised at numerous junctures in the series *Attack on Titan* to create emotional impact. This is, admittedly, something which also owes credit to the way the sound designer on the anime series has edited the composition into the show; but I would argue also shows how Sawano’s music is *especially* attuned to this kind of synchronisation between the audio and visual components. As part of the study, participants are asked to continuously indicate their ‘instantaneous emotions’ by drawing with a pen on a graph, while an audio-visual stimulus (a segment of *Attack on Titan*’s movie instalment *Wings of Freedom* [2015]) is simultaneously presented. Participants were then asked to repeat the experiment while the scene’s original soundtrack was swapped out for a number of alternate Sawano compositions. The results indicated a high degree of congruence in almost all cases, suggesting a kind of replaceability to Sawano’s music in which the function — eliciting an emotional response — sharply aligned to a consistent pattern in which said emotional response increased in tandem with dramatic points in the music, as indicated above (Sasaki et al. 2018, 326-330).

These results indicate a highly systematic, strategic framework to Sawano’s music, replicated across countless soundtracks for numerous anime series. For Sasaki et al, quantifying their participants ‘arousal’ levels while listening to Sawano’s music also surfaces clear observations about the structure of the material studied, in which there is a clear verse / chorus divide, arousal levels sharply spiking once the music reaches the chorus (Sasaki et al. 229). Thus, while we might envision this material as very much a ‘soundtrack’ to the accompanying on-screen element within this study, its arousal quotient also aligns to the patterns of a pop song, in which a designated chorus contains the emotional ‘payload’ of the composition.

What are we to make of this heavily stimulus-orientated approach to musical production? Adorno and Eisler see this kind of application as symptomatic of the audio-visual dynamic, stating: 'music is often brought into play at the very point where particularly characteristic effects are sought for the sake of 'atmosphere' or suspense' (Adorno & Eisler 1994 [1947], 16). It is worth saying, however, that they follow this comment with overt scepticism, stating that over-familiarity on the part of the listener will gradually weaken this stimulus. The more listeners are exposed to this kind of mechanised movie-music, in which designated 'effect' is especially evoked, the more they eventually become inured to the kind of 'instantaneous emotions' observed in Sasaki et al's study. For Adorno and Eisler, these kinds of systematic musical practice form part of what they term 'prejudices and bad habits', but we might contend here that it is in fact precisely this prejudicial power, this capacity to form and then maintain habits of reaction, that charges these musical clichés with such energy. They are forms of emotional manipulation, yes, but effective precisely because of this. As the high degree of congruence in Sasaki et al's study indicates, there is something to Sawano's compositional style that exists at a level beyond the effect of individual tracks — that there might, in fact, be a 'value' in the commonality of this consistency and congruence, ensuring that the kind of 'arousal' generated by his soundtrack for *Attack on Titan* also manifests in his compositions for other series.

The value in this kind of structural relationship holds particular relevance to Lamarre's ideas of ecology — that the media environment represented by the anime industry and its associated components is not simply something 'surrounding' individual producers and consumers of content, but that there is a cascading flow of 'energy' continually moving between and amongst all these component parts (Lamarre 2018, 115). The emotional 'arousal' of the kind illustrated above offers one manifestation of this — a means by which a producer (Sawano) transfers a form of energy via this arousal to the listeners of his music in the instance that they watch a dramatic anime scene it is soundtracking. For Lamarre, the importance of the ecological approach lies in how this cascade of energy might then continually perpetuate beyond this — in this instance, the desire to engender the same effect in subsequent soundtracks, and subsequent animated series. For Sawano, as the creator of musical arousal, and the listener — the recipient of it — their resultant actions are 'brought into relation', or as Lamarre emphasises specifically, 'composed' (Lamarre 2018, 115).

In many ways, we might read this kind of compositional relationship as affirming the views expressed by Adorno and Eisler in relation to movie music, in that 'musical material must be perfectly subordinated to the given dramatic task', a means of ratcheting up and subsequently releasing 'latent suspense' (Adorno & Eisler 1994 [1947], 33). But this would

suggest that if the meaningfully dominant instance of the ‘dramatic task’ – i.e. the visual component — was removed, that the subordinate auditory component would suddenly become imperfect in its capacities. As Sasaki et al’s study demonstrates however, many of Sawano’s tracks retained their capacity for arousal, even when applied to a different scene than that to which they were originally designed. The dramatic potential, then, is at least partly contained within the essence of Sawano’s compositional style itself — carried within the body of the music, not only amplifying latent suspense within the visual component, but generating it internally. With this in mind, I would suggest that the concept of the ecology and the perpetual flow of energy cascades that characterise it leaves room for a multitude of ‘afterlives’ for a given piece of music, quite apart from the initial circumstance and function of its dramatic purpose in accompanying and soundtracking a particular piece of visual content. The two million YouTube views for the Sawano composition *Tears of the Dragon* offer one manifestation of this within the digital realm — the audio is accompanied not by video footage of the *Team Medical Dragon* TV series it originally accompanied, but merely by a promotional still image. In contrast to its originally designed instance of consumption, the auditory element is clearly in the primacy here. A decade on from the piece’s original composition, every ‘listen’ on YouTube offers a further slight cascade of energy.

The digital space represented by online streaming services provides a direct barometer of the kind of emotional interaction generated between Sawano’s music and its listeners — typing ‘Sawano OST’ (‘OST’ is a commonly used abbreviation of ‘Original Soundtrack’) into the search box on YouTube provides a number of accompanying suggested searches, including: ‘sawano hiroyuki epic’, ‘sawano hiroyuki epic battle music’, ‘sawano ost sad’ and ‘sawano emotional ost’. Here, particular responses or situational states of listenership are self-fulfilled by users, to an extent that the ‘epic’ or ‘sad’ nature of Sawano’s music becomes almost fetishised. User-made compilations of Sawano’s soundtracks proclaim loudly in the video titles: ‘Epic Battle Music’ and ‘1 Hour Epic Battle Music’, a kind of fast-food-like release of on-demand ‘epicness’ that can be had at the touch of a button. One YouTube upload, boasting over 14 million listens and purporting to feature ‘Epic sound quality’ is sourced from a fan-created re-master by “Izo-Mastering — HD Music For Audiophiles” of Sawano composition *Vogel im Käfig* (the original of which features on the *Attack on Titan* soundtrack) in which the component audio levels are artificially altered to prioritise the loudness of the bass and percussion elements, while adding reverb to inflate the spacious, ‘epic’ feel of the track. Across this spread of user-generated ‘alterations’ of Sawano’s work, length, loudness and audio fidelity all become modifiers by which the musical experience can be savoured — listeners here are not merely content to feel the emotional response Sawano’s music delivers, but inflect it in order to feel *more*.

In many cases, these ‘unofficial’ uploads of his material have attracted higher views than the official versions. However, rather than seeking to remove these videos, Sawano’s label has instead monetised them by way of YouTube’s ‘Licensed to YouTube by’ policy, where ‘copyright owners... have agreed with YouTube to allow identified music to be used in videos. With this license agreement, they also share the revenue those videos earn on YouTube’.¹¹⁸ Through this tactic agreement to ‘allow’ illegally uploaded versions of Sawano’s work to remain on YouTube in return for the profit and exposure they generate, we might consider this legal ‘grey-zone’ in a manner similar to that observed by Condry in the existence of events such as Tokyo’s Comiket (Comic Market)¹¹⁹ where unofficial ‘adaptations’ of popular manga series are sold to fans and broadly tolerated by rightsholders (Condry 2004, 354). These spaces exist in an interstitial state halfway between the zones of ‘officiality’ represented by the anime, manga and music industries themselves and the ‘unofficiality’ demarcated by the freedom of play captured in the response of their audiences. However, as both the significant YouTube play counts and emotional response indicated by these degrees of fan interaction suggest, these sites of interaction are wholly tangible in nature, and a substantial part of the wider ecology of producer/consumer interaction.

Sawano himself is not immune from indulging in this kind of online ‘amplification’ of his existing material, turning to YouTube as a platform to ‘re-envision’ his material for the captive audience he clearly has there. In October 2020, as part of Project **【emU】** - what he terms a ‘soundtrack revival project’ — numerous tracks from the *Attack on Titan* soundtrack were edited together into an 18-minute long ‘Suite’ in the form of a video performance which saw guest vocalists appearing alongside Sawano and his musicians to perform this material live. This performance video can be seen as an active attempt on behalf of Sawano and his record label to ‘feed’ the extended online ecology of fan-fervour that has built itself around his music. Just as fan-generated uploads of his music, both in its original and altered formats, stand as one kind of charged interaction with the emotional value payload of the material, Sawano’s own generative efforts within this online realm showcase an increasingly savvy and candid acknowledgement of the way ‘revivals’ of this nature might perpetuate and amplify the kind of energy cascade alluded to by Lamarre.

¹¹⁸ <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/7680188>

¹¹⁹ Comic Market, more commonly known as Comiket is a biannual fair held at the Tokyo Big Sight International Exhibition Centre. Beginning in 1975 as a grassroots initiative for the sale of self-published comics, the event has grown to become the largest fan convention in the world.

In concluding this segment, it is worth reflecting on how Sawano's music also finds itself manifested within a very different kind of ecological space: that of the physical. Earlier in this section, I touched briefly on how Sawano's soundtrack for the *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* direct-to-video series produced between 2010-2014 would act as a formative work, both stylistically and in terms of exposure, bridging the early phase of his career working for television dramas, and his later work for anime. The show would achieve a lasting afterlife, however, re-edited and re-fashioned in 2016 into the twenty-two episode TV series *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn RE:0096*, the first Gundam series to air on Japan's TV Asahi network since 1996 (Hodgkins 2016). This incarnation of the series would come in tandem with the unveiling of a correspondingly 'life-size' Unicorn Gundam statue in September 2017 in Odaiba, an artificial island situated in Tokyo Bay (Koh 2017). This statue would replace an earlier large-scale Gundam statue that had stood on the Odaiba site since 2009, where it had attracted over 4.5 million visitors. The new Unicorn Gundam — towering over visiting tourists and spectators at 19.7 metres in height — would come with the added attraction of designated time-slots throughout the day when it would 'transform'. These transformation 'events' would see parts of the statue moving in time to a corresponding light-show and musical excerpts taken from Sawano's soundtrack to the original *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* series.

To those with no knowledge of Sawano's music, and perhaps only periphery knowledge of what 'Gundam' is, the soundtrack to the lightshow and kinetic movement of the statue must by necessity feel, within the concise time limit, 'exciting'. Thus, by transposing the 'animatory' aspect of music (its capacity to lend mobility to that which is static or limited in motion) from the screen to the real world, we might envision the capacity for Lamarre's energy flows to operate according to similarly guiding rules (music investing an animated energy to a visual spectacle) but within new landscapes of play. In this way, the ecologies within which this energy can flow are shown to be expandable, upgradeable, or perhaps, like the Gundam statue itself, transformable. For the thousands of tourists visiting Tokyo every year, partaking of its spectacle as an international megacity, Sawano's music is one small component in 'animating' the face that a guidebook 'destination' such as Odaiba presents back to the world. Onlookers, in turn, become part of this carnivalesque realm of artificially 'imagineered' leisure-made-real in a manner that recalls another of Tokyo Bay's artificial islands, that of Tokyo Disneyland (Raz 2005, 287-294). Just as the refashioning of the *Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn* series from a seven episode video release into a twenty-two episode TV series offers a kind of recycling of content, so too does the replacement of the old Odaiba Gundam with an ostensibly 'new', 'better' version of itself highlight the ceaseless

search for new forms of arousal, as delivered by re-packaged versions of the same source material.

The mediatised pleasure island of Odaiba represents one kind of stage for Sawano's music — namely, a physical one — but for all the glamour and physicality of the up-close sound-and-light-show the full size Gundam statue situated there represents, it is ultimately a resolutely 'local' platform. It may broadcast to an international spectrum of onlooking tourists, but crucially, they must come to it. In the next section, we will look to another kind of platform — one that turns this relationship on its head, instead taking its media payload to the consumer directly. With the concept of the world stage fashioned as a truly global continuum, how might a Japanese composer refashion their relationship with both their music and its public image when confronted with the largest of possible audiences?

The composer as performer — toward a digitally enabled world stage

In considering the fundamental 'role' the composer plays as an embodied persona above and beyond the creative genesis of their music, to what degree can we envision this as a changeable quantity, shifting in response to the demands of the marketplace? In contrast to figures such as Yuki Kajiura, who would use glamorous pop stars to act as an enticing visual front to their music, Sawano would notably offer himself equal billing alongside his featured vocalists as well as frequently appearing in the accompanying music videos. This final section will analyse how, through the use of strategies such as this, Sawano would cleverly re-position the balance of power between composer and performer — privileging the innate value of his compositions by, in essence, occupying both roles himself. Building on the earlier discussion of affordance theory, here I will draw on Bonnie Wade's application of it to the concept of the composer themselves to consider how we might position a figure such as Sawano and his anime music output as both individually creative, but also functionally relational in terms of a wider position within increasingly global understandings of the anime industry and its audience.

These resonances return me to the issue lying at the core of my central research question, namely, is there specific value to be found not only in the creative output of an individual, but the role they occupy as a persona that is both generative of and generated by their compositions? This outline aligns neatly with the kind of framework suggested by Bonnie Wade, in which we might envision the role of the composer as occupying a 'relational sort of role in their society', or rather, that their music remains grounded within its social connectedness to the people consuming it (Wade 2005, 4). As I have shown in section

above, Sawano's relationship with listeners of his music has been defined by the emotional resonance or 'arousal' engendered by it — so much so that his name almost becomes interchangeable with the qualities of his music itself: epic, emotional, and so on. However, in attributing these resonances to him as a 'star' name composer — we needfully draw on the role of the 'performer' in existence above and beyond that of the 'composer' in examining how this connectedness might be best solidified.

I want to suggest that it is via the guise of popular song that Sawano has most notably fluctuated between these two roles — existing in a transitory state in much the same manner as he had done in moving from being a composer primarily for television dramas to one best known for soundtracking anime. Indeed, the origin point for this doubling of roles would be largely the same, coming in 2014 as — with the number of his anime compositions rapidly increasing — Sawano launched what he would dub his 'nZk' project. While Sawano had always dabbled with the use of vocal elements within his music, the nZk project would see this turn noticeably toward a marked 'pop' style utilising named guest-vocalists and designated 'single' releases that would precede full albums of material set apart from the 'Official Soundtrack' CDs that would represent his soundtrack work. Language, in both auditory and visual forms, would also play an important role in Sawano's compositions from this period. Many of these songs would be sung either partly or wholly in English, as opposed to Japanese — with lyrics often contributed by London born, Tokyo-based musician Benjamin Anderson. The track-listings for these soundtracks would also play freely with different orthographies to create an innovative, code-like system. For example, in Sawano's 2014 soundtrack for *Aldnoah Zero* (2014-2015)¹²⁰ — the first of his works to go by the nZk self-branding — the track *Chikyū wo Kasei / Ch19 𠄎FIRE★* is spelled using a combination of roman characters, numerals, katakana and even unicode symbols to play on the phonetic reading of Japanese numerals as well as interchanging the kanji used for the planet Mars 火星 (lit. fire star) for a literal re-interpretation, while elsewhere the tracks *20140910 / 2零14zero91 零* and *ROBOT / R零B零T* also liberally insert the kanji for 'zero' in place of the actual numerals.

This era in Sawano's compositional career would coincide with a noticeable uptick in international fervour for his work, marked by the decision by distributor Aniplex of America,

¹²⁰ *Aldnoah Zero* — stylised as ALDNOAH.ZERO in promotional materials — aired 2014-2015, Tokyo MX. In an alternate reality timeline, the discovery of a hypergate on the Moon during the 1972 Apollo 17 mission allows for near-instant travel to Mars, and its eventual colonisation by humanity. Those settling on Mars declare independence from Earth, and in 2014, utilise immensely powerful robots to stage an attack to 'retake' Earth.

an international arm of the Aniplex anime and music production company owned by Sony Music Entertainment Japan, to officially distribute import copies of *Aldnoah Zero's* soundtrack in North America. With an accompanying web page (www.AldnoahZeroUSA.com) by which fans could pre-order the soundtrack, this initiative — both recognising and courting the attention (and wallets) of fans outside of Japan — would stand in stark contrast to the kinds of international reticence seen from Sony in the first section of this chapter. The official press-release announcing the international release of the soundtrack would prove vocal in recognising the merits of Sawano's music output, proclaiming that his 'one-of-a-kind composition style has captured the hearts of many fans' (2015). To better understand how exactly Sawano's 'one-of-a-kind' style would engender fan response, it is worth going beyond the theories of emotional arousal and impact of individual tracks discussed previously to a meta-textual level in which it is the interaction *between* tracks within a single soundtrack that builds cohesiveness and thus, value for the listener. This kind of strategised approach within Sawano's compositions is perhaps best seen in his soundtrack for *Seraph of the End* (2015),¹²¹ a work that would build on many of the stylistic elements seen in *Aldnoah.Zero* (including the odd orthography) but adapting them from a science-fiction setting toward tones of dark, malevolent fantasy.

The Seraph of the End soundtrack opens with the show's opening theme — *X.U* — a powerfully propulsive pop song sung entirely in English by guest vocalist Gemie, centred around the lyrical refrain: '*The fallen angels you run with don't know / It is our pain that makes us all human after all*'. These lyrics reoccur in the album's second-to-last track, the show's ending theme *scaPEGoat*, which in contrast to the up-beat, electronic feel of the opening, instead opts for a languid, slow-paced rock ballad feel. Here, the vocals — sung by Yosh — interpolate between languages, the first verse and chorus largely sung in Japanese, before switching to English for the second verse and chorus. Almost every other song from the fourteen-track soundtrack returns to either of the two core melodies showcased in the opening and ending themes, often trading out the pop song impact for a deeply resonant, epic feel played out on anthemic orchestral swells of brass and strings. Thus, from two central melodies, an hour's worth of music is spun, the soundtrack re-versioning, re-using and re-interpreting the same auditory earworms or leitmotifs again and again, building familiarity with each re-hearing. Earlier, we observed how the sledgehammer impact of the 'Sawano drop' could be utilised to impose a kind of enforced arousal on listeners — here, with an hour's worth of melodic repetition, the technique is more that of a pneumatic-drill,

¹²¹ *Seraph of the End (Owari no Serafu)* aired 2015, Tokyo MX. In a post-apocalyptic world in which humanity has been devastated by a virus and only those under the age of 13 have been left untouched, vampires have emerged from hiding to claim dominion over those that remain.

tunnelling into the listener's subconscious through sustained, concentrated pressure. In conjunction with his earlier work on *Attack on Titan*, the stylistic success of Sawano's *Seraph of the End* soundtrack would see him return to work with WIT studio — the production team behind both shows — once again on 2016's *Kabaneri of the Iron Fortress*,¹²² a show notable in being one of the first anime 'exclusives' streamed on Amazon's then-new Prime Video streaming service.

By September 2017 and the release of Sawano's second album under the nZk project moniker — *2V-ALK* (pronounced 'walk') — important changes were also afoot in terms of how the composer's record label, Sony, would categorise and present his releases. While Sawano's first nZk album — *o1* — had been released in 2015 on Sony's mainline Sony Music Entertainment (SME) label, *2V-ALK* would become one of the first titles released on the newly created subsidiary SACRA MUSIC, designed specifically by Sony to specialise in anime music. In the first section of this chapter, I outlined a general overview of how — over the course of the 2010s — distribution of Japanese music, both in terms of digital availability, and international availability, began to rapidly increase. The decision by Sony to delineate a dedicated label for anime music forms a key part of this narrative, and echoes strongly Lamarre's vision of the anime industry and its surrounding ecologies as a kind of water-like system in which the construction of canals and tributaries can allow for the best routing of its 'distributive force, the coursing energies of which allow for cuts and segmentations that generate flows' (Lamarre 2018, 26). This alterable, malleable dimension is seen too by Adorno and Eisler as a fundamental element in the nature of soundtrack material, which is constantly demanded to meet 'specific requirements with ever-new configurations' (Adorno & Eisler 1994 [1947], 35-37). The existence of Sawano's nZK project at the interstice between soundtrack and 'pop' music, able to act as the opening and ending themes to anime series, but also function as tracks in their own right, serves as a prime example of this configurability. Crucially, it is its very nature as 'popular' that allows them to do so — operating at a scale of consumption that not only tests out the limits of these configuratory requirements, but also — as in the case of Sony's creation of SACRA MUSIC — encourages the very methods of distribution to change too.

There is an important link to be emphasised here between notions of 'ecology' and the kinds of 'affordance theory' discussed by Wade. In *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*,

¹²² *Kabaneri of the Iron Fortress* (*Kōtetsujō no Kabaneri*) first aired in Japan 2016, Fuji TV, and was made available internationally via Amazon's Prime Video streaming service. In a steampunk-esque world reminiscent of the Industrial Revolution, a virus turns infected humans into undead zombies. Humanity's survivors travel continuously via heavily fortified steam trains in order to fight off attacks from these ravenous creatures.

James Gibson — who originally coined the term ‘affordance’ — outlines how the very act of learning to perceive affordance is, in essence, a necessary aspect in our socialisation as members of a community (Gibson 2014 [1979], 133). In other words, our instinctual priming of how we learn and comprehend the manner in which objects or contents are used becomes fundamental in our existence as part of a wider society. These concepts would be further built on by Norman in his *The Design of Everyday Things*, where we are presented with the concept that affordances ‘suggest’ how any given object may be interacted with. Its characteristics — physical or otherwise — ultimately fit to the actions by which a person might utilise it, matching to their previous experience with similar items (Norman 2013 [1988]). This act of suggestion, or signification, can be seen as an in-built illustrative manual for best-use — we do not need to be explicitly told how to use a piece of music, rather, we feel this through our previous use of other music, and how that, in turn, made us feel. Here, we suggest that the notion of the ‘everyday’ is equatable with that of the ‘popular’, and that it was Sawano’s expressed intersection with pop music — the decision to move into the medium of the vocal-led, verse-chorus pop medium — that succeeded precisely because it afforded to listeners, *suggested* to them, its own inherent tendencies to popularity.

In this sense, we might read the strategies employed by Sawano’s music in the pop idiom as ultimately striving toward much the same goals of ‘arousal’ as that seen in his more traditional soundtrack work — two component routes toward a largely similar end-result of expressed emotional energy. These strategies of ‘sensationalism’ are seen, somewhat cynically it must be said, by Adorno and Eisler as inherent traits of the mass-market medium — what they term the ‘heir of the popular horror story and dime novel’. For them, sensation is the tool *par excellence*, able to readily and easily ‘gain access to collective energies that are inaccessible to sophisticated literature and painting’ (Adorno & Eisler 1994 [1947], 36). It is here, again, in the concept of collectivity that the flows of energy, of value, gain their significance — as affordance theory suggests, the very act of ‘learning to perceive’ is part of our socialisation as members of a populace. Therefore, the climate of popular consumption around a mass-market medium like Sawano’s anime opening and ending themes tells us that, yes, these are popular songs, and should therefore be enjoyed in this manner as opposed to simply further ‘soundtracks’ created by a composer.

This collectivity works in more than one way — indeed, the ‘communal’ aspect of popular music is important to emphasise in relation to Sawano, because although his role as composer / performer has seen him emerge as a star figure very much through virtue of his ‘name’ as a kind of branding for his particular auditory style, as we have shown in relation to his nZk project, much of his rise to fame has been dependent on a pool of guest vocalists

which he has returned to again and again through successive projects. In this sense, we might argue that while the 'name on the box' is Sawano's, the nature of his music for anime has been increasingly defined by its collectivity, something made plain in the way this pool of vocalists has expanded over time to incorporate new talent amidst long-standing regulars. This is best evidenced across the *Attack of Titan* soundtracks, where vocalist Laco¹²³ — who would also collaborate with Sawano on the tracks *Nexus* and *Trollz* — would emerge on the soundtrack for season three of the show in 2019, singing the duet *Symphonic Suite [AoT] Part 2-5th: Apple Seed* alongside fellow vocalist mpi, who had been a mainstay of the *Attack on Titan* soundtracks since the very first season in 2013.

Sawano's focus on vocal led compositions as part of his anime soundtrack oeuvre has also seen his promotional activities intersect with new kinds of digital initiatives. In November 2019, the Japanese YouTube channel The First Take — dedicated to shooting musicians and singers performing in a single take — would launch, regularly uploading performances of musicians singing their biggest hits direct to camera in this stripped-back, minimal setting. Sawano would be an early advocate of the channel, with not only one, but two performances of his uploaded to it in Spring 2020, featuring guest-vocalists Yosh and mizuki. By January 2021, the channel would boast 3.3 million subscribers. Taken in this context, and considering Sawano's oeuvre of output by the end of the 2010s, vocal elements would come to be a defining element of his soundtracks, not only acting as a 'trademark' stamp of his compositional authorship, but also, as seen above, lending his music a capacity for visually-enabled co-performance. Indeed, the gradual normalisation of Sawano's compositional style as vocal-led, whether that be in the form of choral elements or outright pop melodies, therefore presents the question — has this shift occurred because vocal tracks lead to better spreadability of the music, or is this spreadability simply an inadvertent side-effect? The marked, 'named' focus of Sawano's nZk project suggests that there is clear motive in moving closer to a pop idiom. What is exceptional is not that Sawano has created vocal led music — as we have seen in previous chapters, many composers of anime music have done so — but that in Sawano's instance, there was a continual and seamless integration of this into his career overall. With Sawano, the point at which we draw the line between 'score' and 'song' is elusive — melodic elements of his soundtracks are re-fashioned and re-made into songs, while pop songs punctuate and soundtrack standout action scenes in the shows his music accompanies.

¹²³ Laco (1992-) first collaborated with Sawano in 2019, quickly becoming a mainstay of his stable of associated performing talent. She is also a member of the pop band EOW.

This interchangeability is arguably the greatest strength of his music — a means by which a one-size-fits-all compositional approach serves all formats and all occasions by prioritising emotional 'arousal' at all costs. Taking a cynical view — of the sort put forth by Adorno and Eisler — we might ask whether, if all Sawano soundtracks offer the 'same' musical function, could the exact same piece of music not be used again and again? Rather, we might suggest, it is here that we find the real value in Sawano's 'nZk' branding experiment, which allows the use of different guest vocalists, cover art and music videos to allow each new release to feel sufficiently diverse from previous ones. Likewise, because Sawano's songs are created from the off as accompaniments to animated series that will be streamed internationally, their sonic imprint, we might say, is a direct product of a transnational outlook — envisioned not as an appendage to a Japanese visual medium that just happens to then become popular overseas, but as a fundamental component in a package moulded from scratch to fit itself to truly international tastes. The concept of the 'guest' or 'featured' artist is itself an exercise in branding — a notably overt signification to the 'produced' nature of a musical collaboration that seeks to situate two distinct artists together within a single work. In this jostling of hierarchies — which artist is subordinate to the other? Who is 'featuring' whom? — Sawano's role as composer/performer is fundamentally intermediary. He is not the 'face' of the track, which arguably belongs to the guest singer, a notion that supports the vocal element as primary within the mix. He is, however, the 'name' behind the track, and as the cover art of his single releases continually suggests — where it is his name that achieves primary billing as opposed to the track title or guest artist's name — it is the signification of being a 'Sawano composition' that remains the greatest draw to the song in question.

The final piece in conceptualising the picture of an anime 'ecology' existing around Sawano's music comes in the form of the corporate structures surrounding his parent record label, Sony — a theme which ultimately resonates with the wider background to the Japanese music industry covered at the head of this chapter. In December 2020 it was confirmed that market-leading anime streaming platform Crunchyroll had been acquired by Sony. This purchase would follow the prior \$150 million acquisition by Sony of Funimation (and their own streaming platform Funimation Now) three years earlier in 2017 (Spangler 2017). The press-release marking the \$1.175 billion takeover of Crunchyroll would readily acknowledge the existence of Sony's anime/music-centric subsidiaries as part of this corporate-creative relationship:

Through Funimation and our terrific partners at Aniplex and Sony Music Entertainment Japan, we have a deep understanding of this global artform and are well-positioned to deliver outstanding content to audiences around the world. Together with Crunchyroll, we will create the best possible experience for fans and

greater opportunity for creators, producers and publishers in Japan and elsewhere (Locksley 2020).

With both Crunchyroll and Funimation now part of the Sony corporate family, the company would now dominate legal audience access to Japanese animated content outside of Japan. The decision to acquire Crunchyroll would not only mark a remarkable bit of corporate nous — poaching the streaming venture from rival entertainment giant Warner Media, who had been looking to offload Crunchyroll after acquiring them in 2018 (Hipes 2018) — but also a surprising U-turn from the company who had previously attempted, as part of a consortium of anime production companies, to establish ill-fated video-streaming platform Daisuki in 2013. This vaunted home-grown rival to the likes of Crunchyroll would ultimately only survive for four years, and was discontinued in 2017. In hindsight, Sony's goal — ownership of the distribution channels of anime content overseas — can be said to have been finally reached, but via an ecology that was from the very beginning thoroughly transnational in nature, as opposed to stemming solely from Japan.

The announcement of Sony's Crunchyroll acquisition would help conclude a particularly successful year for the company. Only a few days prior, LiSA¹²⁴ — an anisong artist who had previously collaborated with Sawano on the track *narrative* (taken from the soundtrack of 2018's *Mobile Suit Gundam NT*), and who is also signed to Sony's imprint SACRA MUSIC — was announced as the most popular Japanese artist internationally on Spotify, with over 2.3 billion streams around the world and listeners in 92 different countries (Harding 2020a). LiSA's phenomenal success in 2020 is largely attributed to her featuring as the opening song artist for the anime series *Demon Slayer* (2019),¹²⁵ the film incarnation of which — released in October 2020 — made headlines as the highest grossing Japanese film of all time (Harding 2020b), tapping into the fervour of Japanese movie-goers facing cinemas emptied of the usual spread of Hollywood fare due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Distributed by Sony's anime subsidiary Aniplex, the film would act as another formidable weapon in the media conglomerate's arsenal of interrelated entities, which would include — amongst other activities — LiSA wearing Sony branded headphones during her own performance on the aforementioned The First Take channel.

¹²⁴ LiSA, also known as Risa Oribe (1987-). Japanese singer whose opening and ending theme single releases since 2011 have made her one of the most successful and internationally recognised names in anisong.

¹²⁵ *Demon Slayer (Kimetsu no Yaiba)* aired 2019, Tokyo MX. Based on a popular manga running in Weekly Shōnen Jump between 2016-2020, the series follows the story of a young boy who vows revenge after demons kill his parents and leave his sister transformed into a demon herself. The film instalment — *Infinity Train* — which picks up directly from where the TV series leaves off, premiered in October 2020.

The continuing focus of Sony in having as direct a hand as possible in all aspects of the distribution chain of its content, both inside and outside of Japan, can be considered in tandem with the fate of AniUta, a short-lived venture supported by a number of rival Japanese media companies including Flying Dog, Avex Pictures and Kadokawa. Conceived as a kind of official platform for the consumption of anime music — and thus, a direct rival to competitor streaming services such as Spotify, which often notably lacked this content — the service was ultimately shuttered in March 2020, with the company releasing the following statement:

Given the challenges in creating and maintaining a successful service that meets our users' expectations, we decided to sunset the US version of ANiUTa app. We are committed to focusing on our enterprise efforts, and will continue the development of ANiUTa for our users in Japan (Hodgkins 2019b).

The failure of ANiUTa, in contrast to Sony's newfound willingness to co-opt (and then consume) international competitors who have 'done the hard work' of building technical platforms and established audiences shows a clear canniness to the workings of markets outside of Japan, and the potential revenues to be had there. As one of Sony's leading anime music artists, Sawano has undoubtedly benefited from the entertainment conglomerate's corporate muscle, whilst simultaneously acting as an auditory trailblazer for Japanese music overseas, his music 'inhabiting' the vehicle of the anime it accompanies to push it to the widest audience possible.

This kind of mutually beneficial symbiosis between audio and visual would emerge elsewhere in 2020, with pop cultural commentators noting a new trend within the Japanese music industry centred around buzzworthy pop groups including Yoasobi,¹²⁶ Zutomayo¹²⁷ and Yoroshika,¹²⁸ who would all utilised eye-catching, colourful 'anime-style' music videos to propel their latest singles to success (Michel 2020). These efforts were not tie-in singles, as most anime opening and ending theme songs are, but were in fact wholly original audio-visual creations — more in the vein of short films — in which audio and visual are used

¹²⁶ Yoasobi. Japanese pop duo active 2019-present. The double-platinum certified success of their debut single *Yoru ni Kakeru* would see them invited to perform on the 71st *Kōhaku Uta Gassen* broadcast.

¹²⁷ Zutomayo, also known as Zutto Mayonaka de ii no ni. Japanese pop group active 2018-present. Famously secretive, to the degree that even their members are unknown, their animated music videos have garnered millions of views on YouTube.

¹²⁸ Yoroshika. Japanese rock duo active 2017-present. Rapidly gaining popularity with young audiences, the group would be nominated for 'Best Japanese Act' in the 2020 MTV Europe Music Awards and win acclaim as one of the 'Best 5 New Acts' in the 2020 Japan Gold Disc Awards.

together to tell a story. The success of this format would pay immediate dividends, with Yoasobi's track *Racing into the Night* scoring over 137 million views on YouTube and earning the group an invitation to perform on NHK's year-end Red And White Song Contest (*Kōhaku Uta Gassen*).¹²⁹ Here, we see the relationship between Japan's music industry and anime come full circle — music videos of this nature highlighting how in many cases, it is now a piece of animated content that is the 'appendage' or tie-in to a musical product, as opposed to the other way around. This aesthetic convergence, in which it is notably not just an animated music video that serves to promote a piece of on-trend pop music, but an expressly 'anime-style' one (indulging in the visual tropes of the medium, such as cute female characters and stylised fight scenes), sees two industries that have for decades worked hand in hand come together in newly exciting ways. While the act of utilising anime content to serve as a music video is hardly new to Japan — rock duo Chage & Asuka's¹³⁰ collaboration with Studio Ghibli in 1995 for the video for their single *On Your Mark* is a particularly noteworthy example — it is the digital platform and changing consumption habits represented by YouTube that serve to inject a tangible impetus into an industry had become famed for its adherence to aging business models.

Whereas prior Japanese music industry tycoons such as Tetsuya Komuro would find that their intersection of the pop and compositional fields would refashion them as 'multi-hyphenate' identities, Sawano — through the clever presentation of his public image in music videos and self-branding exercises like his nZk and Project 【emU】 outputs — has only served to solidify his role first and foremost as 'composer'. Whether within a popular or classical guise, his formal 'position', behind a piano, sees him couched in a fundamental language of signified musicality. For Wade, the figure of the 'performer-composer' remains a fundamental part of the fabric of Japan's musical modernity, a role defined by 'their competence and situatedness as a performer' (Wade 2005, 4). Thus, Sawano serves as a particularly useful example to build on and expound upon many of the individual elements seen in my earlier case studies, suggesting that the role of the anime composer is, in many instances, in fact defined by the multiplicity of roles it contains within it. While Sawano's pop music and soundtrack output often works to different functional ends, the cross-pollination in musical style, texture and overall feel has ensured that whatever the medium, whatever the

¹²⁹ The *Kōhaku Uta Gassen* is an annual Japanese television special broadcast on New Year's Eve. Featuring some of the biggest names in the country's music and showbiz industry, performers are divided into two teams — red for females, and white for males. The significance of the annual broadcast entails great honour on those asked to perform.

¹³⁰ Chage & Asuka. A popular Japanese musical duo who were active 1979-2009. Known for their folk-inflected soft rock tunes, their popularity peaked in the 1990s and they have sold over 30 million records to date in Japan.

featured artist, there is a consistency that reinforces a concrete brand identity — a statement of intent that this is, indeed, another Sawano composition.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to bring my continuing history of anime music and the role of the composer within it up to the present day, encompassing many of the significant changes the anime and music industries have undergone in Japan over the past decades as they have tackled the dual forces of internationalisation and digitalisation. In seeking to examine to what degree these two elements stand as opportunities or threats, we have strived to present anime music as a central force — an energy-flow — moving amidst and between these intimately interlinked industrial systems.

Japan's status as the second-largest music market in the world (behind only the United States) affords it immense commercial power, but also — as recent history has shown — has seen it become reticent to move away from established norms of operation, in which its defining quality is domestic Japanese content, sold on the physical CD format. At odds with the rise of digital streaming services in the rest of the world, the high retail price commanded by CDs has led Japanese record labels toward an increasingly protectionist mindset in which TV tie-ins and the wider media-mix ecology — of which anime is such a key element — have offered a bolstering buffer to the winds of technological change. However, it is within the increasingly international sphere of this very same anime ecology that we can look for precedents of systematic transformation. With online consumption platforms like Crunchyroll revolutionising access to animated content outside of Japan, where the visual field has led, the auditory is inclined to follow — with Spotify showing high year-on-year growth over the past few years in Japan, are we on the cusp of a breakthrough in the status quo of Japan's digitally reticent music market?

To this end, composer Hiroyuki Sawano has served as a central locus for my case study in examining how within the extended ecology of one of Japan's largest corporate giants — Sony — individual players hold the capacity to utilise structures of audio-visual congruence for maximum impact on audiences, both within Japan and abroad. Tracing Sawano's career trajectory from his origins in live-action television drama to his increasing switch to soundtracking anime, we look to the theory of emotional 'arousal' and how Sawano would utilise strategised compositional techniques such as dramatic rhythm changes and repetition of central leitmotifs to directly inform how audiences *should* feel when watching the anime series his music accompanied. This flow of emotional energy and audience response would

find itself manifested within a number of platforms, ranging from the digital space represented by services like YouTube, to physical, real-world locales such as Odaiba's life-size Unicorn Gundam statue, given life by Sawano's music as part of a mediated 'destination'. Through the capacity of his soundtracks to inject an additional sense of energy or motion to the visual content they accompany, Sawano's music can be seen to 'feed' the extended ecology of fan-fervour that exists within the anime industry's component elements, rippling out into incarnations often far removed from its origins.

In this regard, both the popularity and 'pop'-inclined nature of Sawano's music — which through his opening and ending theme songs, and canny use of featured guest vocalists — forms part of what we read as part of its 'affordance', namely its design as an expressly populist product. From early efforts by anime distribution company Aniplex to distribute Sawano's soundtracks internationally, to the way Sawano curates his personal image via his appearance in the accompanying music videos for his songs, we see examples of suggestion that, crucially, inform audiences how they should perceive both him and his work. These promotional efforts — dovetailing the interests of both the anime and music industries — have seen Sawano ideally placed to both test out and trailblaze initiatives within both fields, at a time of critical change. Against a backdrop of media convergence, in which Sawano's ultimate 'owner' — Sony, the Japanese conglomerate of which his parent record label SACRA MUSIC is a subsidiary — has now also co-opted and consumed the distribution channels which bring international audiences to its anime output, we are presented again a remarkably 'whole' image of an ecology in which every part seemingly intersects with each-other.

The past decade, over which the successes of Sawano's compositional career have played out, acts as a test case of trial and error in which failures to 'home-grow' technological rivals to international streaming services such as Spotify and Crunchyroll have finally afforded international fans of anime (and its music) the access they have long wished for — Japanese labels like Sony now realise it is better to work *with* the international elements of their extended media ecologies, as opposed to against them. Thus, slowly but surely, the static status-quo of the Japanese music industry is being upended, with anime and its audiences a key player in this shift. With the expectations and access afforded to viewer/listeners in Japan and abroad increasingly brought into alignment and relation with one-another, a new status quo is set forth: one in which figures like Sawano exist as more than just composers of auditory added-value, but performers, playing to a world-stage that has never felt larger than it does now.

Conclusion

Overture to conclusion

When originally setting out on this project, the broad concept of its shape and structure were very much modelled on the historiographical approach found in Jonathan Clements' *Anime: A History*, driven by discourse analysis and a sense of awareness to the idea that the anime industry was very much that, an industry. For myself, having formerly worked as a journalist in the UK music industry, this rather appealed to me — obsessed as I had been from a young age with the impulses of consumer behaviour that would formulate the fluctuations of the Top 40 hit singles chart week in, week out. What I wanted to piece together was a narrative that not only laid out the history of the relationship between music and anime in Japan, but to use this historical backdrop as a framework to synthesise a theory of value, a concept I found useful in explaining succinctly why anyone other than hardcore anime fans should care about this particular genre of popular music from a country on the other side of the world. 'Value' sounded important, and music — I felt — needed to be seen as an important form of artistic object, as a form of media, particularly in terms of what was happening in terms of contemporary, popular music in Japan. To this extent, I laid out the basic proposal of my project, and by and large, the core structure has mostly gone unchanged since then. Originally, I accounted for a larger number of (albeit shorter) chapters, but as often happens when one begins writing, I found that the analytical depth I desired for each core chapter necessitated each one being longer, and that by situating the crux of my thesis around a smaller number of case studies, each in itself would be more impactful and focused.

Some changes, of course, cannot be foreseen. In the early Spring of 2020, just as I had finished the second core chapter of my thesis and was preparing for a two-week session of fieldwork in Japan to experience some of the music I was planning to write about in person, COVID-19 *happened*. Needless to say, in those first few weeks of the crisis where sheer ambiguity, supermarket queues and toilet roll shortages threatened to overwhelm the very framework of rational public order, plans changed and I was forced to cancel both my flights to Japan and my fieldwork there. Dreams of rescheduling the postponed trip quickly evaporated as it became clear that the pandemic situation was here to stay — throughout it all, Japan maintained its strict policy of non-admittance to non-Japanese nationals for the

purposes of short trips. Denied the possibility of entering Japan, and frustrated by the sense of unravelling chaos here in the UK and how both might impact on the future planning of my project, I resolved to return to the writing of my thesis as a kind of meditation exercise — pushing keys, words appearing on the page. It was in these moments, where day upon day bled together in a seamless spell of non-time, that I was reminded of the simple power of a good tune, the ability of music — perhaps more than any other artform — to ‘augment’ mood. I’ve never been one, thankfully, to suffer much from writer’s block, and music — I feel — is no small part of that. Just as I found music gave life to animation, so too did it seem to impel me toward writing my remaining chapters.

In some ways, the enforced lockdown was a blessing. Relatively free of the distractions of the ‘world outside’, I was able to progress smoothly with much of the central writing up process of the thesis, and with each passing chapter, the sense of palpable progress was tangible — a fitting tonic to the seeming lack of any kind of ‘progress’ in tackling the pandemic situation on the other side of the firmly closed front door. What surprised me most was often on the face of it banal in nature, the feeling of returning to a book from the university library — first taken out over a year earlier prior to the lockdown, and thus exempt from pesky recalls — and finding a nugget of relevant information or theory previously missed. Or perhaps how as the months passed, while the initial tremors of the pandemic had caused delays to the production of a number of anime series, a year into the ‘new normal’, this was largely a thing of the past. Nothing could stop the anime industry, not even COVID.

The continuing nature of the field of anime studies itself deserves a brief comment. One of the great challenges for academic writing on anime is the seemingly unconquerable battle against the currency of the subject matter — amplified by long publication lead times as well as trends in viewing habits that seem to move at a faster pace than ever. In 2016, when I first began considerations around this project, Makoto Shinkai’s *Your Name* had just become one of the highest grossing anime films of all time, with news outlets clamouring to acclaim the director as the ‘next Miyazaki’. Shinkai, of course, had been producing acclaimed works for over a decade at this point — and given the success of *Your Name*, one would imagine a rapid incorporation of his rise to prominence and his directorial style to figure within the evolving academic narrative of anime’s history, much as *Spirited Away* became a lodestone for academic treatments of anime following its Oscar win. But writing now, in 2021, *Your Name* already feels like ‘old news’, succeeded not only by another Shinkai release (*Weathering With You*) but also the movie incarnation of TV anime *Demon Slayer*, which shot past *Your Name*’s \$380 million box office take to a record breaking \$413 million, becoming the highest grossing Japanese film of all time in the process.

In a way, the success of *Demon Slayer* vindicates the feelings I had that there was work still to be done on the sheer systematic scale and capabilities of the domestic Japanese media mix 'machine', but also how it held immense prospect and value — both financially and otherwise — for anime's continued growth internationally. Music, for me, always remained central in this role, something I was reminded of every time I opened a browser window to YouTube and was met by a flood of anime music, each video boasting hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of views/listens. The consumption habits engendered by anime music, able to exist not only in its original instance of accompanying visual content, but also as a 'standalone' content item in its own right, alludes to the powerful intangibility of the medium, its ability to refigure itself both to platforms and moments beyond its source origin.

Why, then, the question of value? This is a question I returned to many times, often due to reservations that it suggested a crass, overly commercial identification with anime as an artistic medium. A sense that it was 'all about the money'. And yet — as I look to suggest in my further perspectives below — while there are many nuances to the notion of 'value', I would also suggest that the pecuniary overtones of the term are entirely intentional. As much as we might wish to treat anime as an artistic object, it exists invariably as a product of a system (or rather, many interlocking systems), designed to make money for the production committees that invest in its gestation. The increasing academic focus on the 'business' side of the anime industry, as born out by recent scholarship from Mihara and Denison is to be highly welcomed in this respect.

It was this identification with the system-like, formalistic drive toward value-generation that saw me return again and again to the ideas laid out in Adorno and Eisler's *Composing for the Films*, which, for all its age and cynicism, felt so closely aligned to the sense of coolly machined spectacle I saw within anime. Writing in the late 1940s about the Hollywood system and the rise of Walt Disney, Adorno and Eisler's writings on the 'culture industry' suggested to me clear parallels with the kind of producer-consumer dynamic seen in anime today and how music was central to the impartation of energy to this medium. Therefore, in reaching back to the past, I have sought to evidence a narrative in which while technologies and consumption habits have changed, the fundamental notion of how we create value from what we see and hear has not. In summarising and concluding on my central case studies below, I would suggest that it is in examples like these that we find our proof of value, across half a century of history they show not just the gestation, maturation and evolution of a medium, but a continual demand and delight in the imaginatory impulse the simple combination of visual and music afford us.

The origins of anisong exist multiply: Laying the foundations for a ‘cultural priming’ in familiarity to typologies of music in Post-War Japan

Central to my thesis from the very beginning was the notion that in considering questions of anime music, we must look not only to traditional conceptions of orchestrated ‘background music’, but also to theme music — of the sort which from 1963’s *Astro Boy* right on through to the present day has served to accompany the opening and ending credit sequences of televised anime. In my opening chapter I looked to the formative years of the 1960s and 70s in search of both the role and origins of this particular ‘typology’ of musical content delivery. Central to this discussion was the combinatory nature of these auditory moments — both as aesthetic objects but also functional ones, ‘prompts’ to prime audiences to the emotional payload of their parent shows.

The functionality of these catchy, vocal-led songs aligns closely to wider discourses of the anime media-mix, of ‘added’ value existing in the peripheries beyond the animated show itself, from a whole host of media objects such as toys, games and merchandise, of which music was perhaps both the most intangible, but also the most emotive. This emotivity was linked to its fundamental role in lending energy to what has since been termed ‘limited animation’, of the kind pioneered by *Astro Boy*’s creator Osamu Tezuka. For all that the cost-saving applications of largely static on-screen visuals suggested a paucity of action, it was therefore the essential role of the accompanying music — as seen in *Astro Boys* opening theme — to inject motion back in, auditorily.

Here, the narrative of anisong’s origin(s) holds prospect for enticing links to earlier forms of Japanese auditory play, ranging from the street-theatre of *kamishibai* to the very origins of imported Western musical forms in the years following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 where these ‘new’ sounds would be co-opted by the nation’s educators and policy makers as tools to edify the country’s young populace. These seeds of musical identity would bloom a century later in the Japanese Post-War cultural identity, the tone and feel of cherished childhood tunes commingling with the hot pulse of new Western styles, ranging from pop and rock through to jazz. This spread of generic categorisation would echo the assortment of playful options seen in anime’s developing media mix, building toward what we might understand as the ‘cultural priming’ of the nation’s viewers and listeners toward a familiarity for a certain format of content in serving the role of opening and ending themes.

This journey would continue into the 1970s, and just as the earliest efforts of anisong revelled in their optimistic childishness as a nation of captive youth grew toward maturity, so too would their music. We return here to the notion of genre — or perhaps more specifically, the possibilities engendered by the existence and recognition of multiple genres — and how a diversification in styles would not only further feed anime's media mix, but prime its audiences toward new modes of receivership. Growing into adults, anime's audiences in the 1970s would be not only viewers, but very soon 'fans'. They would understand the parameters and typologies of what they viewed, would demand more like it to feed the sense of cultivated taste engendered in them by this increasingly finessed stream of content.

This, then, is a kind of foundation for the subsequent narrative unfolding of anime music's history. But as is evident in the notion of market-and-audience maturation outlined above, even this foundation is multi-staged and multifaceted in nature. Therefore, while it is entirely tempting to seek to locate a kind of singular 'origin' of anisong's history in iconic series such as *Astro Boy*, to do so is to obscure the more enticing picture of a potential pre-origin. This music, after all, had to come from somewhere. To this end, notions of origin stretch both backward and forward in time, taking influence from disparate sources to build up a kind of wider sonic nationhood, a theme that would ultimately prove central to the next chapter.

Composers of anisong exist multiply: The role of the composer-producer in producing nationhood at the interstice of East and West

Returning to my hesitations around the potentially 'loaded' nuances regarding the commerciality of value theory in relation to music, it became evident early on that if there would be one decade that spoke best to the complexities present in the meeting points between consumer aestheticism and moneyed aspiration, it would be the 1980s. In the first of my composer-centric case studies, I turned to the figure of composer-producer Tetsuya Komuro as an illustrative example of how the mediatised world of Japan's pop industry intermingled with that of the anime industry with a commercial fluidity that spoke to both audience desires and the role of composer-as-individual themselves.

Situating this case study at the apex of Japan's economic boom — the bubble years of the late 1980s — anime music here stood as a representative cultural commodity by which viewer/listeners created a sense of meaning and pleasure for themselves. Here, anime's media mix was not simply a question of producer-led added value, but a means by which consumers dictated their own values back at the very same industries, constructing social identities for themselves within a decade that reflected moneyed opulence and thrill-seeking

in the extreme. This jostling for position within the chain of popular productivity would demand new forms of identity for its creatives — and those best able to tap into these impulses, such as Komuro, would reap the rewards precisely because their existence between-states (e.g. moving from the role of composer to producer, or from the soundtrack to pop music mediums) was fundamentally fluid.

This new age of Japanese aspirational aestheticism would demand a correspondingly new breed of music, and Komuro's deft importation and incorporation of European-influenced dance music would ultimately define the late 1980s in its accompaniment to big-name series such as *City Hunter* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*. Just as Komuro's music would become wrapped up in some of the decade's biggest anime franchises, so too would his persona become a kind of 'brand-name', his musical tendencies imprinted on audiences as an identifiable 'Komuro-style' subset of popular music. Karaoke — as both a technological format and performative social structure — would play a key part in this, Komuro's music was ideally matched to the new need for catchy, lyric-led songs to feed a diet of auditory interactivity. Here, we see one of many musical 'afterlives' that exist beyond the first instance of anime music's initial attachment to a show itself. From both a financial point of view, and in the sense of amplifying an audience's familiarity and emotional attachment to a given piece of music, karaoke would serve as a powerful new piece in the growing ecology of interlinked components supporting its interior sense of value.

Ultimately, Komuro's ability to occupy the role of both composer and pop producer would situate him at a representative juncture for a multitude of musical formats and influences — soundtrack and opening/ending themes, East and West, the experience of a singular anime viewer/listener and their role when re-figured as part of a national identity defined by media and mediums known 'in common' amongst many. Taking the lead from this example, my following case studies also look to composers who straddle these various roles — evidencing how with each decade in turn, these kinds of producer/consumer dynamic would find new forms by which to package the central drives of value-creation evidenced so keenly in Japan's economic bubble.

Familiarity is key to notions of musical value, and nostalgia is one of the most powerful forms of familiarity

If the boom of karaoke in the 1980s would offer one example of the sheer power of familiarity in relation to music, then nostalgia would stand as another. In both cases, the dynamic is similar — we enjoy hearing what we know we already enjoy. If music holds a certain value in

its expressed capability to make us feel or think a certain way, then just as its enabling energy might serve to impart action to a particular on-screen visual, then so too might its emotional content serve as a kind of 'pairing' for the expression of mood or moment.

Therefore, as we follow the transition of Japan from a booming bubble economy into one locked into a 'Lost Decade' of economic malaise, questions of precisely this kind of emotional resonance bear further scrutiny — opening up a search for why this manner of tonal familiarity might form such a core part of understanding music's application to anime during this era. Here, through a close study of composer Yōko Kanno, we see how the rise of video games offered new landscapes for compositional talent to experiment musically, before bringing these sounds and techniques to play within the conjoining sphere of anime. Like Komuro, Kanno's music would occupy a powerful interstice between East and West, in this occasion drawing on the genre of jazz music to iconic acclaim in series such as *Cowboy Bebop*.

Observing a wide spread of Kanno's compositional work across the 1990s, a theme begins to emerge — one of a particularly melancholy-tinged 'retro-futurism' that would see her heart-wrenchingly powerful music paired to decaying, baroquely elegant science-fiction and fantasy backdrops. These animated worlds would offer a potential escape for Japanese audiences caught in ill economic times, cocooning them in an illusory nostalgia for times gone by. Whilst other shows during this era would actively parody or 'deconstruct' the past to offer one solution to a sense of disorientation and lack of purpose, composers like Kanno — as well as Studio Ghibli's Joe Hisaishi — would offer more of a palliative indulgence to fleeting memories of youth lost forever to the past. These emotional resonances worked because, like Komuro's 'brand-name' output in the previous chapter, they spoke to a kind of familiarity — in this instance nostalgia.

Crucially, this nostalgia — as composed by figures like Kanno — existed in an expressly 'active' form, shaped and moulded to the specific needs of those inhabiting Japan in the 1990s. Familiarity thrives because it reassures us with what we know — we feel safe in its loving embrace — but we would suggest that what marks out musical nostalgia as particularly powerful is that it not only offers familiarity, but coquettishly teases it, holding it out to us in a manner that places it forever just out of reach. Thus, in listening to the kind of melancholically nostalgic music typified by Kanno's soundtracks from this era, we engage in a very specific kind of aesthetic play — one in which the act of searching, of reaching out, is in many ways the entire point. Just as familiarity acts as a kind of bridge between multiple instances of hearing, nostalgia plays the role of conjoining past, present and future within a

linked realm of emotional meaning-making. In opening passageways to the past by which we might re-access memories to savour their emotional substance again and again, music serves to unlock the doors.

If familiarity is key, then systemised, formula-driven approaches to creating this familiarity hold specific compositional value

Our observations of anime music across the 1980s and 90s serve to surface the notion that forms of familiarity are central in understanding how the medium creates value, both for itself, and the visual material that it accompanies. With this in mind then, it follows that for the anime industry and those working within it, achieving a kind of systemised formula by which this familiarity might best be created ‘on demand’ would be most prudent indeed.

With the dawn of the 21st century, our continuing case studies turn to the figure of Yuki Kajiura to observe how we might envision compositional output as a kind of interpretative canvas, an iterative laboratory of ‘causal links’ in which defective and poorly fashioned components are discarded or improved upon toward an end goal of achieving a sort of idealised ‘format’ for musical delivery. Indeed, it is in this chapter that it is not only the question of familiarity in and of itself that is key to musical value, but that *how* this familiarity is established is every bit as important. Thus, through close analysis of Kajiura’s work, I evidence how a composer might draw upon a particular ‘sonic palette’ of materials to set up a clear recognisability of component elements — the core ingredients by which we might affirm a given song unquestionably is by a given composer and not another. In this, I achieve another manifestation of the ‘brand-name’ composer — only here, the brand name is in many ways contained in the auditory content itself, a sonic ‘identity’ as much as a signified one.

This is not to say, however, that the visual dimension is unimportant. As this chapter goes on to elucidate, central to my case study of Kajiura’s musical career is the manner in which she effectively ‘produced’ a highly attractive visual wrapping for her musical output in the form of three-piece girl-group Kalafina. By aligning herself to the inherent inbuilt supporting structures of the Japanese pop music industry, in essence ‘playing the game’, Kajiura was able to utilise Kalafina as an aesthetic front for her music, allowing it to achieve a prominence and success in the popular music charts it would likely not have otherwise accomplished. This candid awareness of and engagement with the systems of Japan’s idol-driven musical cultures showcase how formula — whether auditory or visual in nature — can exist as a powerful metric for ‘engineering’ success, if followed correctly.

For Kajiura's music, whether in the anime soundtracks released under her own name, or the pop songs produced by her but released by Kalafina, it is recognisability and familiarity that remain key. For the consumers of the anime series which this music accompanied, these sonic manifestations of brand identity form part of the shows themselves, multi-nodal extensions of a media object that becomes hydra-like in nature. In discussing the form, format and formula of anime music, returning to the notion of multitudes is ultimately useful in reminding us that — after all — one of the simplest ways in achieving familiarity is, correspondingly, through a multitude of potential release 'outlets'. Throughout the 2000s, opportunities to access these content outlets would proliferate, spurred on by new mediums of release (eg. DVD and Blu-Ray) but also new audiences entirely, many of them outside of Japan. For every release outlet, an opportunity to connect — to access — the charged flow of musical energy waiting, poised, to make the connection.

Engineering emotional 'access points': With the world-as-stage, the role and value of the composer is also multiplied

In bringing our history of anime music up to the present day, the final chapter in many ways seeks to reaffirm the themes of systemised familiarity and recognisability evidenced in our case study of Yuki Kajiura. Like Kajiura, Hiroyuki Sawano's compositional style revels openly in its almost mechanised adherence to manufactured emotional manipulation through sustained use of a consistent sonic identity. With soundtracks for iconic series such as *Attack on Titan*, Sawano would — perhaps more than any of the other composers featured in this study — become the epitome of the 'brand-name' composer, recognised not only by fans for the instantly recognisable sound of his music, but actively touted in trailers for the shows his music accompanied.

What is especially useful in focusing on Sawano however, is how, through canny use of emergent streaming services such as Spotify and YouTube — maligned for many years by Japan's CD-dominated market — his music would find itself trailblazing a charge of renewed strategic focus for Japan's music industry. Bringing what was in danger of becoming a bizarre relic of the past — hopelessly wedded to aging release strategies and physical formats — into the 2010s, Sawano and his parent record label Sony would ride the trajectory of change toward a newly enabled digital future for Japanese music.

In this new digitally-enabled world, it was not only amongst Japanese fans that Sawano's name would become a kind of by-word for a particular kind of musical 'value'. Fans overseas

— now able to keep pace with their Japanese compatriots via day-and-date streaming services such as Crunchyroll — would also readily recognise his material, and in providing an additional market for this music, would open avenues to new kinds of consumer interaction and value-creation within the domain of anisong. What kind of ecology — to return again to Lamarre’s useful envisioning of this space — does this fashion, and what can it tell us about the role of the composer? To begin with, it sees them and their music achieve a better form of primacy within the creative staff that make up a show — if anime discourse up to now has largely been defined, as in Film Studies at large, by auteur theory and the all-embodying figure of the director, then by refocusing our lens on the composer, we would argue that we allow ourselves to see a more complete, perhaps even more truthful, portrait of the medium’s value. As in Denison’s work examining the role of the producer in the form of Studio Ghibli’s Toshio Suzuki, anime ‘objects’ emerge in a new light as multifaceted creations, each angle and facet ripe for a very different kind of interpretation.

To compose, to produce — these terms, in their way, return us always to a notion of addition, of creation. They imply an embodying and bringing into being of something that was not there before. This too, is a kind of value. Music, of course, thrives in that it can function both singly — listened to on a CD Hi-Fi, at a live concert, or on a pair of cheap headphones — but also in tandem with a piece of visual content. This is, in essence, the nature of the soundtrack, of the opening and ending theme. In the instance of Sawano’s music, it might even appear accompanying a giant life-size Gundam statue as it ‘transforms’ in front of a crowd of assembled spectators who thrill to the sound-and-light show before rushing into the building behind it to purchase (rather smaller scale) assemblable plastic model versions of the same statue.

The existence of anime music is an existence that plays out across multiple origins and destinations mapped to arouse the appetites and emotions of its audiences in situations just like this, even if they exist as peripheral to the core show itself. In this manner, the notion of the ‘soundtrack’ can be refigured as a literal sound pathway, taking the listener on a journey from first listen to the hundredth, from TV to YouTube, via any number of intermediary locations inbetween. Composers like Sawano and Kajiura, so acutely attuned to the kinds of recognisability and familiarity that will best carve out and maintain these flows of fan fervour, achieve a kind of value all their own because through this kind of systemisation, they come to define the very nature of what we imagine when we hear the term ‘anime music’. This, too, only serves to further reinforce the systems of familiarity within which they operate.

The emphasis of this final chapter, which maps out Sawano's career concurrently with the ongoing trajectory of his record label Sony (who, as part of anime's ever-present, overarching 'ecology', also incorporate the anime production/distribution company Aniplex) serves as a powerful reminder of just how intermeshed the nature of the industry now is. Quite in spite of fears that notions of value hint at rank commercialism, it turns out that it is this very same commercialism that ultimately serves as the lifeblood by which the industry has been able to sustain itself across the half-century that serves as the backdrop of our overall study. The commercial drive of the anime industry has woven itself, symbiosis-like, into every other kind of 'value' so that to speak of it, we do so in the sense that every interaction with the industry, from the point of view of both producers and consumers, inevitably informs every other interaction. Across these years the anime industry has by necessity evolved, matured and mutated on many occasions. But if there is a message to be found in this process of change, it is in fact that behind the guise of transformation, the core structures of value-formation present in both the medium itself and its accompanying music have remained largely the same. What *has* changed — and we note this in particular relevance to the overtones suggested originally by Adorno and Eisler — is that the industry has simply *got better* at doing what it does, pumping its lifeblood of media content ever faster, ever more profusely, to a wider audience than ever before.

Perspectives and final thoughts

It's 3:15pm on a grey Monday afternoon and on YouTube, another anime fan 'likes' the opening theme to his favourite series, *Demon Slayer*. The song, *Gurenge*, is accompanied by a flashy promo video in which singer LiSA dances enticingly alongside two robed figures wearing traditional Japanese *oni* — demon — masks. As the song sails through its catchy chorus to its conclusion, the fan nods approvingly at the video's impressive view-count, over 73 million, and clicks away to the right of the video player where YouTube's recommendation bar, populated by a powerful algorithm, is offering up 'Joe Hisaishi live at the Budokan — Studio Ghibli 25 Years Concert in 1080p High Definition'. Comments in various languages pile up and intermingle, many in English, others in Japanese, one in French, another in Spanish. In 2021, the internationalisation of the anime industry seems second nature. The content is still made-in-Japan, but it speaks to a global audience, even if the lyrics to its opening themes still boom from laptop speakers in Japanese.

There is a lingering suggestion that the anime industry has become 'too fast-moving' to realistically offer any considered analysis of its current state, in the fear that as soon as pen is put to paper, the 'rules of the game', so to speak, have already changed. Some evidence

is offered of this in Chapter 5, where the rapidly evolving status of streaming access to anime and, more importantly, what corporate entities control this, bears sizable ramifications for international consumption of the medium moving into the future. As one corporate giant swallows another, a year old 'new status quo' is swiftly rendered obsolete by even newer systems and structures. There is scant time for new cornerstones of fan fervour and academic discourse to develop before they are swiftly succeeded by even newer ones. And yet, to ignore the present is to do a disservice to the producers and consumers working at this coalface, defining its tendencies — the history of anime (and its music) is not only in the past, it is being forged newly with each passing day. Trends may be fleeting or sustained in nature — with only hindsight to tell the difference — but in offering the case studies selected in this study, I have sought to conjoin past and present toward a goal of showing, at the very least, the longer-running trends *behind* the trends.

If theory is what emerges in the gaps and spaces between examples, then within the course of the preceding five chapters, I have aimed always to tell a narrative that is compelling because it serves to remind us that media consumption — now more than ever — exists in a holistic state, one in which multiples combine to achieve a 'total' work of art. When Wagner spoke of the universal *Gesamtkunstwerk*, central to this idea of a total aesthetic was the notion of synthesis — many artforms combined together. Film, of course, has echoed many of these ideals for over a century now. But in applying these concepts to anime, I believe that — through the incorporation of notions of media mix — there is scope perhaps, to envision an even more *total* totality. Music's capacity to act as an especially value-full appendage to the animated medium can be traced back to iconic examples such as Disney's *Fantasia* (1940), but in Japanese anime, its utter incorporation within the very framework of the nation's media mix tie-in-led symbiosis of audio/visual consumption habits suggests something more. Here, music is more than appendage, it is — as the millions of views on YouTube suggest — an enabling energy that is capable of superbly joining and flowing between the links that make up the ecology it inhabits and sustains itself on. To animation, it breathes life. To listeners, it brings arousal, sadness, joy. To composers, singers, musicians and countless other industry personnel, it offers a livelihood, a means of value-creation from sheer aesthetic impulse. Above all, it is simply music — and on listening to our favourite song, familiar refrains we have heard countless times before — that is often all it is required to be.

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