

Music Structuring Animation:

The Role of Chopin's First Ballade in the Series Finale of YOUR LIE IN APRIL

Nash Hickam and Jeffrey Yunek

More often than not, pre-existing piano music in multimedia works is disfigured in two significant ways: (1) the music is cut up, distorted, and altered in order to fit with what is on screen and (2) it usually contains farcical and erroneous depictions of piano playing (Rudolph 2022). The Japanese anime *YOUR LIE IN APRIL* (Fuji TV, 2014–2015) is an exception on both counts. Chopin's Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, op. 23 is played in its entirety during the final episode of this anime with clear moments where the playing is accurately animated. This preservation of the original work and attention to the details in the animation raises the following question: how does the distinctively animated and preserved rendition of Chopin's first ballade relate to the narrative in this series finale?

During the performance of this work, the main character, Kousei Arima (henceforth Kousei), is competing in a piano competition while his love interest is undergoing life-threatening surgery. According to the pianists consulted for the music in *YOUR LIE IN APRIL*, Chopin's first ballade is an ideal piece to convey the complex emotions that would be felt in this scenario (Arakawa 2016, Chapter 43). Michael Klein states that this piece contains tragic possibilities with a secondary theme that depicts a desired ›as if‹, and an apotheosis that portrays an ostensible victory over the previous dysphoric waltz (Klein 2005, 126). As opposed to most multimedia works, we suggest that the music in *YOUR LIE IN APRIL* is the main driver of the narrative and structure, whereas the animation and dialogue play a subservient role. We will use concepts found in Klein (2004; 2005; 2018), Almén (2008), Hatten (1994), and Hepokoski and Darcy (2006) to analyze the narrative of Chopin's Ballade No. 1 and show how the musical structure requires no alterations to convey the complex emotional arch occurring at the series finale of *YOUR LIE IN APRIL*.

Narrative Summary of YOUR LIE IN APRIL

The anime *YOUR LIE IN APRIL* is widely known for its beautiful animation, impressive music, and heart-wrenching story. It is a visual adaptation of the manga (Japanese visual novel) written by Naoshi Arakawa that follows the story of Kousei, a young piano prodigy that had been given the title of ›the human metronome‹ for his ability to perform every song he played perfectly. After his mother – who was also his harshly demanding piano instructor – passed away, it affected his ability to play the piano, and he stopped performing.

His situation began to change after he met a girl named Kaori Miyazono (henceforth Kaori), a free-spirited violinist whose performances reflect her personality. From an early age, she was enraptured by Kousei's playing and always dreamed of performing alongside him. After she found out they were enrolled at the same high school, she was finally able to become friends with him. Through their friendship, she helped bring him back to the world of music. After many attempts at getting him to perform, she was finally able to persuade him to enter a competition and play in front of a crowd again. It is later revealed that she has some form of terminal illness.¹ As the show progresses, her health begins to deteriorate, and she can no longer hide it from her friends. During Kousei's performance in the series finale, she is scheduled to undergo a risky surgery with the odds of her survival looking slim. While he is performing Chopin's Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Kaori comes to him in a dreamlike state, and he subsequently realizes that she did not survive the surgery. He hallucinates them performing one last duet together before she fades away, and he returns to reality.

The supplementary notes in the manga suggest that the author incorporated Chopin's first ballade for its tragic elements. As expressed in the following note by Masanori Sugano (Lecturer at Tokyo University of the Arts and Musashino Academia Musicae) published in the manga, this ballade melds with the final scene perfectly, and accurately portrays the emotions and narrative of the story (Arakawa 2016, Chapter 43).

¹ Based on the symptoms, the fandom believes it to be Friedreich's Ataxia (Shigatsu wa Kimi no Uso Wiki 2024).

As you can imagine from the title ›ballade‹, which means ›in a narrative style‹, this dramatic work contains all the elements of a story – introduction, development, twist, and conclusion – and boasts immense popularity among fans of classical music. Of Chopin’s four Ballades, *No. 1* is the only one that begins with a fiery, passionate introduction that foreshadows its tragic conclusion. Said to have taken inspiration from the ballads of Polish poet Mickiewicz, this piece unfolds at a dizzying pace, blending war and grief with the joy of peace. [...] The music of Chopin conveys these emotions and experiences to the audience.

Methodology

To unpack Sugano’s claim of a tragic nature in Chopin’s Ballade No. 1, we will employ Byron Almén’s tragic narrative archetype: »The defeat of a transgression by an order-imposing hierarchy, and logically expressed as the combination ›defeat + transgression.« (2008, 231) This refers to when an initial negative state (the order) is attempted to be altered by the actions of a transgressor (the transgression) but fails. A classical literature example would be Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1597): the initial state (the separation of the titular couple due to family enmity) is attempted to be altered by their transgression (plans to marry and flee) but fails. Similarly, Klein defines tragedies as failed triumphs (2004, 41). As seen in his analyses, tragic works typically begin with minor keys whose dominance is threatened by major keys (which function as transgressions) – but inevitably return to minor. By extension, the tragic archetype can be understood as the opposite of the comedic archetype. Whereas the tragic archetype sees the defeat of the transgressor, the comedic archetype sees the transgressor overcome the order-imposing hierarchy and can be viewed as »victory + transgression.«² Accordingly, Almén’s comedic narrative archetypes consistently align with Robert Hatten’s expressive genre of tragic-to-triumphant (1991, 82; 1994, 67–90).

Almén identifies the discursive strategies of breakthrough and epiphany as key elements in signifying victorious transgressions in comic works (2008, 187). Breakthrough is the disruption from the anticipated formal course of the piece, whereas epiphany is a narrative shift that affects the narrative trajectory of the piece. These two concepts are normally signaled by »(1) the unexpected appearance [...] of a transcendent passage and (2) the

² Referring back to *Romeo and Juliet*, the narrative archetype would have shifted from tragic to comedic if Juliet had simply woken up slightly earlier.

immediate interpretive shift that it engenders from intransigent conflict to victory.« (Almén 2008, 191) As we will show, Chopin's first ballade is exceptionally tragic because the prospect of the transgression's victory is reinforced by both breakthrough and epiphany – until it is reversed near the end of the recapitulation.

As Almén states, a musical narrative is often supported by the use of topics, in which groups of topics may be associated with the order or transgression (2008, 81). He established nine types of interactions between narrative and topics; here, we focus on Type III: narrative with two topical fields that constitute poles of the narrative opposition. The example he uses is Schubert's three-verse strophic song »An den Mond« D 468. This piece consists of two eight-measure periods: one in A major and one in A minor. Each consists of different accompaniment figures and differing levels of harmonic complexity. Whereas the major section is stable and alternates between tonic and dominant, the A-minor section is full of diminished sevenths and secondary dominants. Each section also contains vocal lines that reflect the accompaniment: the former portrays »fond memories of natural settings and joyous meetings,« whereas the latter portrays »separation and loss« (Almén 2008, 82).³ Although this piece is not as formally complex as Chopin's Ballade No. 1, the idea of having two topical fields (one consisting of topics that represent the order/another that represents the transgression) will prove useful in constructing connections between musical topics and the animation.

Along with topical analysis, form can be employed as a narrative vehicle in tragic works, especially when a piece contains deviations from a prototypical sonata structure.⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy refer to the minor sonata as »generally interpretable within the sonata tradition as a sign of a troubled condition seeking transformation into the parallel major mode.« (2006, 306) They continue, stating:

³ Although Almén references common aspects of topics, he does not seem to give explicit topic designators (such as march or pastorale).

⁴ Given the unusual thematic and key structure of this work, there are competing interpretations of the form. Based on Schenker's sketch of Chopin's first ballade (1979, 133), many authors argue for a three-part song form (Green 1979, 304–06; Rawsthorne 1966, 45), which Parakilas connects to the literary ballade (1992, 84–87). Alternatively, others view it as a deformed sonata (Samson 1992, 45–50; Klein 2004; Azziz 2015). We opted to use sonata form as a frame in order to evoke the narrative aspects of Hepokoski and Darcy's theory.

The possibility of a tonic-minor-to-tonic-major trajectory (or the represented inability to attain that transformation) is rich in metaphorical implication. If we understand sonata form as a metaphor for an idealized but nonspecific human action [...] minor-mode sonatas provide the means by which an initially negative state (the minor mode) is acted upon in order to seek to overturn it by means of major-mode assertion at or around the ESC point, even though that quest might be unsuccessful.

In other words, minor-mode sonatas in particular have a strong narrative charge in terms of transgressions and order-imposing hierarchies. Having a major mode-ESC during the recapitulation would give the impression that the major mode has triumphed over the minor mode, which could be viewed as the comedic archetype (victory + transgression). This simple formula is challenged in Chopin's first ballade, however, because there is a clear major-mode ESC in m. 180, but it is followed by over fifty measures (over 20% of the piece) of *G minor* and a marked return of the primary theme after the secondary theme's ESC (Figures 1 and 2).⁵ In this situation, the return to a minor key along with a minor PAC after the major ESC (m. 208) can be interpreted as markedly tragic because it occurs after an ostensible victory in major.⁶

The unusual nature of the major-mode ESC in Chopin's first ballade is further emphasized by its atypical tonicization of VI (see Figure 1). In a prototypical classical sonata (Figure 3), a minor sonata's secondary theme is first set in the relative major (III), and then played in tonic in the recapitulation. In this work, however, both secondary themes are played in *E^b major* (VI). Although third-related keys are certainly less marked in post-Beethoven sonatas, we read the use of VI as marked because the leadup to the secondary theme features a prolonged *F* dominant that suggests the typical tonicization of III (*B^b major*) (Figure 4). Instead of the expected resolution to a *B^b* triad, this *F* dominant features an elided resolution into another dominant seventh chord (*B^b7*), which subsequently tonicizes *E^b* (VI). In short, the tonicization of VI is marked in this case because the normative III was being *projected* as the harmonic goal, but it is subsequently subverted by VI.

⁵ Score excerpts from the edition Fredric Chopin, *Fryderyk Chopin Complete Works*. Edited by Ignacy J. Paderewski. Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 1949.
https://imslp.eu/files/imglnks/euimg/2/2a/IMSLP73959-PMLP01646-Chopin_Paderewski_No_3_Ballades_Op_23_filter.pdf (01.02.2025) Annotations are by the authors.

⁶ PAC stands for Perfect Authentic Cadence, whereas ESC stands for Essential Structural Closure (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 18).

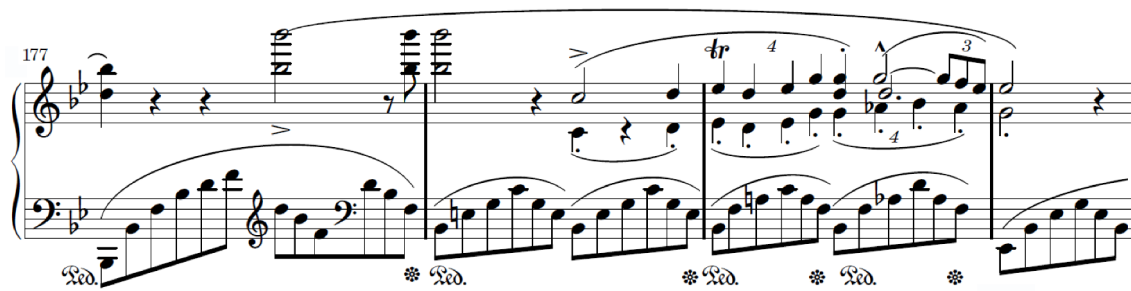


Figure 1: Harmonic closure in E^b major in Chopin, Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 177–80

Presto con fuoco.

Figure 2: Return to G-minor tonic in Chopin, Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 194–212

As we will show later, the three main tonicizations of G minor (i), B^b major (III), and E^b major (VI) are consistently correlated to present, past, and (imagined) future images

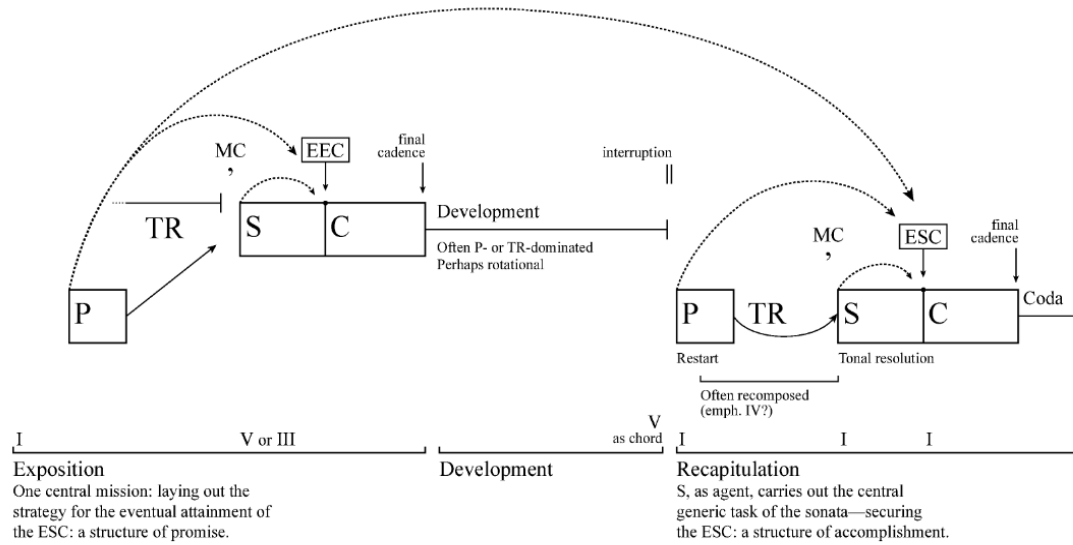


Figure 3: Sonata Form Chart (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 17)

calando
dim.
smorz.
8va
più dim. e riten.

Gm: VI/III Cad⁶/III V/III

Meno mosso
sotto voce
pp

III⇒V⁷/VI VI

Figure 4: Tonicizations of III and VI in Chopin, Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 62–71

of Kaori in the anime, respectively (Figure 5). Sections set to G minor showcase dark images of Kaori incapacitated on the surgery table, in which the minor key correlates to her perilous health. Sections set to B^b major feature flashbacks of Kaori, in which the major

key correlates to her previous health.⁷ Sections set to E^b major feature *imagined* images of a healthy Kaori who magically materializes next to Kousei in an ethereal plane to play with him. We consider the use of VI (i.e., E^b) as an important key choice in signifying this imagined return because of its markedness and its affiliation with deceptive resolutions. That is, just as VI functions as a fleeting deceptive resolution to a major chord in a minor work, so does Kaori's presence on the ethereal plane function as a short-lived, fictional moment signifying a successful operation.



Figure 5: Key-image correlations in series finale of YOUR LIE IN APRIL (2014)

Before proceeding with a close correlation between the musical narrative of Chopin's first ballade and the animation of YOUR LIE IN APRIL's series finale, we will first establish an overview of the musical narrative elements that we claim guide the anime's narrative (Figure 6). The negative order is established at the beginning by the use of G minor and the uncanny and troped waltz topics for the introductory and primary themes, respectively. This is followed by the presentation of the positive transgression in the secondary theme, which is represented by E^b major (VI) and the nocturne and berceuse topics (Klein 2018, 32). The development then transitions from the negative order to the positive transgression (i.e., from the PT to the ST) before arriving at the most formally disruptive moment of the work: the presentation of the ST in apotheosis at the beginning of recapitulation with ostensible harmonic closure in VI in m. 180 (Figure 1).⁸ This harmonic closure is subsequently undermined by a return of the primary theme in G minor followed by a new *tempesta*-theme topic in the coda. To emulate this dark turn after the ostensible victory of

⁷ It is made clear at the end that Kaori was suffering severe health issues throughout the series, which were initially hidden from Kousei.

⁸ PT and ST stand for Primary Theme and Secondary Theme, respectively.

the transgression in the music, our following correlation of the music with the anime will rhetorically emphasize the possibility of a happy resolution – before revealing the anime’s heartbreaking twist.

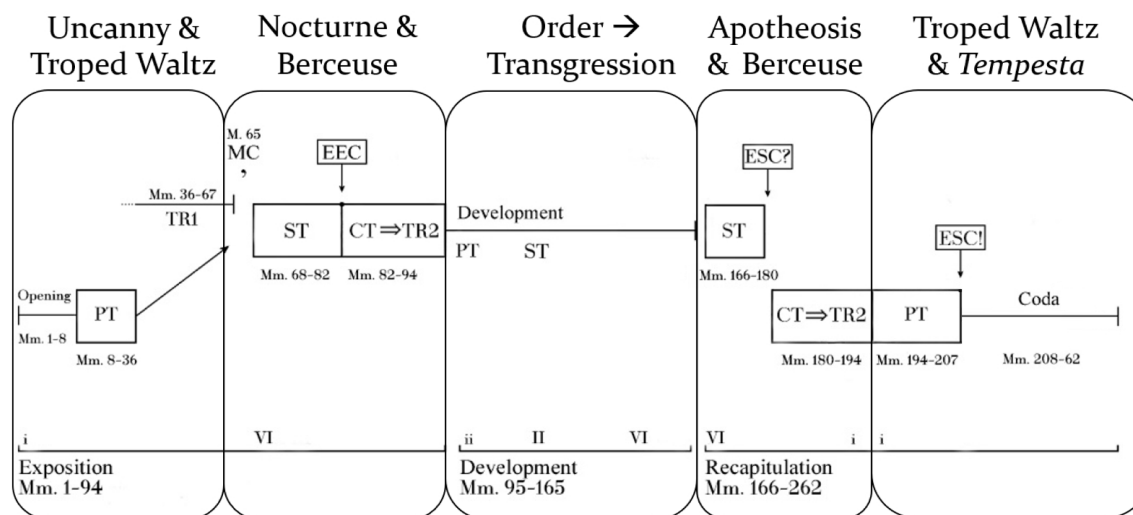


Figure 6: Formal and narrative structure of Chopin’s Ballade No. 1, op. 23

Correlation of Chopin’s First Ballade with the Visuals and Dialogue of YOUR LIE IN APRIL

The negative order in the work is indicated at the start by the uncanny opening of a Neapolitan chord paired with the *ombra* topic. Klein describes the uncanny in music through musical topics and chromatic harmony as follows:

Ranging from the music of Beethoven to that of Schoenberg, we can make an intertextual abductive hypothesis about the musical signs surrounding the uncanny. To the signs for the *ombra* topic (tremolos, diminished-seventh chords, Neapolitans) we can add enharmonicism, strange uses of chromaticism, odd voice-leading, and mechanical repetitions of music material. The uncanny is associated with signs for terrible recognition, anxiety, dread, death, and the sublime. In the wake of the uncanny, we may read narratives of the dissolution of subjectivity, the ego’s heroic reintegration in fate of that threat, or the ego’s defiance in spite of it. (Klein 2005, 87)

Accordingly, the opening of this piece follows many of Klein’s descriptors of the uncanny, such as the opening chord being an arpeggiation of a Neapolitan chord, chromaticism, diminished-seventh chords, and odd voice leading (Figure 7).

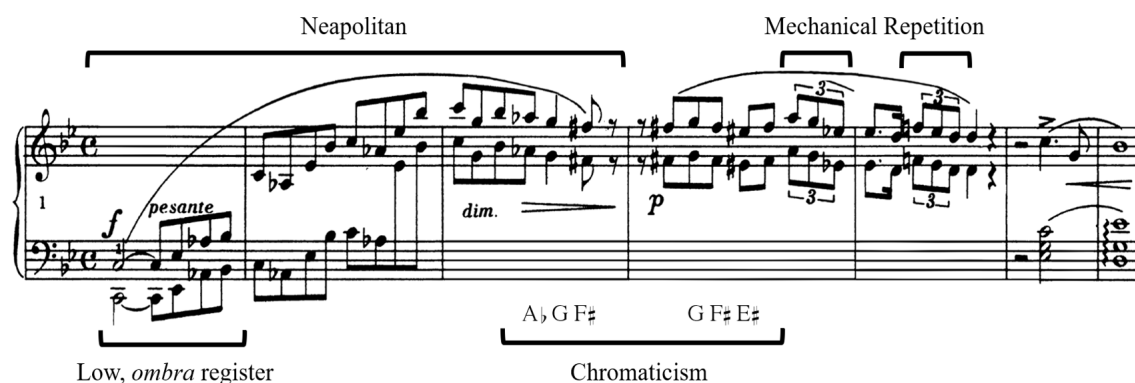


Figure 7: Annotation of uncanny signifiers in Chopin's Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 1–7

Klein's comments on the narrative potential of the uncanny topic correlate tightly with Kousei's emotional angst at this moment in the anime. Klein specifies two narrative connotations of the uncanny: (1) initial terrible recognition and (2) a subsequent heroic intervention (2005, 87). This aligns with the preceding plot in the anime. At the beginning of the penultimate episode, Kousei just experienced a sudden downturn in Kaori's health, in which she passes out and starts having a seizure. As a result, he is later shown sulking alone in his room – refusing to practice for his impending piano competition. This is followed by his reluctant return to the stage, which fulfills his promise to Kaori.⁹

The negative order of this uncanny introduction is continued through the use of a troped waltz topic for the PT (Figure 8). This topic (starting in m. 8) ties the negative order to the relationship of Kousei and Kaori through its association to partner dances. Waltzes are renowned for their representation of romance and are typically used for »validating the romantic status of a couple« (Mirka 2014, 178). This dysphoric waltz, therefore, correlates to the relationship of Kousei and Kaori, through which the listeners can infer that the state of their relationship is grim because of the troping via minor mode (Hatten 1994, 295).¹⁰ That is, waltzes typically are in major and are danced by a couple, whereas this waltz is in minor and only features Kousei on stage. As a result, the use of minor tinges the scene with sadness and emphasizes the absence of Kousei's musical partner, Kaori, who is simultaneously undergoing life-threatening surgery.

⁹ Before going on stage, he is shown curled on the ground repeating the phrase, »I've got to play.« That is, all indications are that he does not *want* to play, rather he *has* to play to fulfill his obligation to a dying friend.

¹⁰ Klein refers to this as a dysphoric waltz (2005, 126).



Figure 8: Troped waltz topic in Chopin's Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 8–12

The subsequent transition features a precise correlation of B^b major and G minor with images of a healthy and sick Kaori, respectively. The most notable instance of this is in mm. 31–37, in which an ensuing cadence in G minor unexpectedly tonicizes B^b major then returns to G minor (Figure 9). In mm. 31–32, there is a subdominant-dominant progression progression in G minor that ends with V⁶/V. Instead of resolving back to V in G minor, the chord the chord semitonally shifts to the dominant of B^b major and features a marked display passage in the right hand. This shift correlates with a flashback of Kaori comforting Kousei followed by several images of a smiling Kaori against a golden background as the music continues in B^b major. Just as the music cadences in G minor in m. 36, the bright images of Kaori suddenly shift to a dark operating room filled with bloody surgical equipment. The vital signs show that she is still alive, but as the music reaches the end of the transition the audience is given its last visual confirmation that she is alive – a slight twitch from an incapacitated Kaori and a final image of stable vital signs. The anime then shifts into a dreamlike state which is signaled by a progression through nocturne and berceuse (i.e., lullaby) topics in the secondary and closing themes, respectively (Klein 2018, 32). As noted by Julian Horton in his chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, the nocturne is understood as an outgrowth of the vocal serenade (2014, 647), which is used to call a love interest at night. Accordingly, the anime features Kousei calling out to Kaori with the repeated phrase of »reach her«.¹¹ At the beginning of the berceuse topic in the closing theme, the scene suddenly shifts from the concert hall to an ethereal plane (Figure 10). This lullaby correlates with a delusional, dreamlike state for Kousei that coincides with harmonic closure in the abnormal key of VI – a key associated

¹¹ At this point, the serenade can be viewed as unsuccessful since Kaori fails to make an appearance, which is significant in comparison to the secondary theme's reprise in the recapitulation in apotheosis.

Figure 9: Gm–B^b major juxtapositions in Chopin’s Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 31–37 (cf. Figure 5)

with deceptive harmonic motion (same as Figure 1). That is, Kousei is disconnected from reality where Kaori is fighting for her life on the operating table.



Figure 10: Image of Kousei on the ethereal plane during closing theme (mm. 82–94; YOUR LIE IN APRIL 2014, [5:10–5:45])

The development features the arrival of Kaori to this ethereal plane, in which parallel key relationships and thematic juxtapositions signal a positive outcome for Kaori (i.e., a victorious transgression). Kaori arrives during the onset of the development’s presentation of the primary theme, which is previously correlated with her perilous state. However, this theme is subsequently undermined because its conclusion is cannibalized by the onset of the secondary theme in the parallel major. That is, only the primary theme’s basic idea and repetition are played before its continuation to cadence chromatically devolves before ending with an elided cadence into the secondary theme in m. 105 (Figure 11). Accordingly, the tragic order of the primary theme is undermined by the encroaching arrival of

the transgression-affiliated secondary theme in the parallel major. The onset of the secondary theme is emphasized in the anime by Kaori playing her violin over Kousei's otherwise unaltered performance of this ballade.¹² Musically, the addition of the violin transforms the work from a solo into a duet.¹³ Hermeneutically, Kaori's playing suggests a significant progression in Kousei's delusion because she transitions from a purely visual entity to an audio-visual one.

a tempo (meno mosso)

94 *pp* *sotto voce* *sempre pp*

102 *fz* *sempre cresc.* *sf* *sf* *molto cresc.*

continuation to cadence devolved

106 *ff*

Secondary theme in A

Figure 11: Cannibalization of primary theme in A minor by the secondary theme in A major in the development of Chopin's Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 94–109

¹² The anime consistently frames Kaori as a musician who flaunts staid musical traditions, so her playing over a piano solo is perfectly within her character.

¹³ Although a deeper analysis of the new timbres and counterpoint produced by this superimposed violin line may yield additional correlations to the narrative, we have limited our analysis to the harmonic and formal musical correlations that persist throughout the entire work to reduce the scope of the paper.

The animation suggests that Kousei is not initially fooled by Kaori's apparition, but this changes at the moment of epiphany in the middle of the development. As established earlier, Almén defines epiphany as a sudden moment where the narrative shifts from intransigent conflict to victory. We identify that the moment of intransigent conflict in this piece occurs in mm. 126–137, which feature an extended V^{b9} chord signaling E^b minor (Figure 12).¹⁴ Accordingly, this indication of E^b minor could be viewed as undermining the delusional key of E^b major, which is associated with a positive future outcome for Kaori.

Figure 12: Evaded tonicization of E^b minor in Chopin's Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 126–38

As this is happening in the music, Kaori stares down Kousei and plays her most aggressive passage on the violin: a tremolo on the flatted ninth of the chord (C^b) that ascends in octaves before shifting to a high F (the fifth of the chord). Prior to this moment, Kousei is

¹⁴ The $F^\sharp$ appoggiatura at the beginning of m. 138 hints at the possibility of E^b minor (i.e., $F^\sharp = G^b$).

shown as crestfallen, as if Kaori's presence is a reminder of her perilous condition. However, this all changes as this chord unexpectedly resolves to E^b major in m. 138: the music breaks into an animated scherzando passage and Kousei's face shifts to a relaxed smile, as if buying into the delusion. As scherzos are generally lighthearted and playful works used to signify comedy (or ironic comedy) (Russel and Macdonald 2001), this scene could be interpreted as a pivotal moment for the transgression and suggests that the negative order will be defeated.

This moment of epiphany is soon followed by the other major signifier of this transgression's success: *breakthrough*, signified by the use of the secondary theme in apotheosis at the beginning of the recapitulation. Following Edward T. Cone, Klein defines apotheosis as »a special kind of recapitulation that reveals unexpected harmonic richness and textual excitement in a theme previously presented with a deliberately restricted harmonization and a relatively drab accompaniment« (2005, 124). Accordingly, this piece features an unusual recapitulation in which the secondary theme is now played in octaves in the key of VI. Accordingly, this fulfills Almén's previously discussed concept of breakthrough since it is an unexpected appearance of a transcendental passage. Klein summarizes the narrative impact of this music in general terms:

The second theme of this ballade presents an alternate reality, a desired »as if« that stands in opposition to the opening waltz. When the second theme returns in apotheosis, one has the sense that the musical persona has overcome the darkness of the earlier waltz [...] Broadly, the drama of this ballade begins with a somber state followed by a desired alternative whose eventual apotheosis promises realization. (2005, 124)

Naturally, this general musical narrative gains additional resonance when applied to the anime. The »as if« is the alternate reality in which Kousei and Kaori are united. The transcendental nature of their reunion is emphasized during this theme by a marked shift from traditional animation to pastel stills of the two happily playing together, which lends a sense of surrealness to the scene (Figure 13).¹⁵ The theme ends with a final harmonic indication of the victory of the transgression: a PAC in VI (Figure 1). Accordingly, all signs point to a happy ending. In the music, all elements of a comedic archetype are fulfilled. There is a moment of epiphany, breakthrough, and there is structural closure in the trans-

¹⁵ This serves as a continuation of the earlier serenade. That is, the first presentation of this theme was for an absent Kaori, whereas it now functions as a symbol of the couple's union.

gression's key of E^b major. These all correlate with elements in the anime: Kousei moves from sadness to joy and is united with Kaori in a moment of transcendental, surreal bliss.



Figure 13: Pastel images of Kaori and Kousei at the beginning of the recapitulation in Chopin's Ballade No. 1, op. 23, mm. 166–80 (YOUR LIE IN APRIL 2014, [5:10–5:45])

After this moment, this dream begins to fade as the moment of Kousei's dreadful recognition of Kaori's tragic fate is correlated with the return of the *ombra* waltz in G minor and the arrival of a *tempesta* coda (see Figure 2).¹⁶ Accordingly, this serves as the tragic twist in the narrative which aligns with Klein's claim that this moment serves as the peripeteia of the work (2018, 33).¹⁷ As the closing theme plays its lullaby, a retreat from the dream-like state is signaled through a return to normal animation as Kousei turns towards Kaori (Figure 14). As the primary theme returns in m. 194, he begins to realize she is leaving him (explicitly indicated by internal monologue). Both in the music and anime, the fate of Kaori is all but sealed as the music features a dominant pedal foreshadowing a return to G minor while Kaori's apparition begins to fade. Just as the dominant pedal resolves to a root position G-minor tonic in m. 208, the animation features Kaori bent back with a light exploding from her chest and the music shifts to a *tempesta* topic featuring an increase in rhythm, register, and tempo (i.e., the *presto con fuoco* in Figure 2). The use of *ombra* and *tempesta* in the coda signifies a tragic conclusion as this juxtaposition is historically associated with signifying horror or tragedy (Mirka 2014, 283).¹⁸ As the *tempesta* topic subsides in m. 248, Kaori completely fades away and Kousei soon returns to the concert hall.

¹⁶ This shift from major to minor is foreshadowed in the introduction, in which the opening major chord is retroactively understood as an opening predominant Neapolitan chord in the key of G minor (see Figure 7).

¹⁷ Klein falls short of claiming this moment serves as a moment of dread realization (i.e., anagnorisis) because of music's inability to be explicit, but the anime seizes on this narrative possibility by linking the return of G minor with Kousei's plea of »Don't leave me.«

¹⁸ For example, Mirka references *ombra* scenes of Handel, Hasse, and Jommelli, and melodramas on supernatural subjects by Georg Benda and Fomin that use juxtapositions of *ombra* and *tempesta* to arouse awe and terror.

Although the viewer never gets visual confirmation of Kaori's death, Kousei acknowledges that Kaori has died by murmuring a single word: *sayonara*/farewell.¹⁹



Figure 14: Images of return to animation, Kaori fading, and Kaori exploding
(YOUR LIE IN APRIL 2014, [8:07–10:00])

Conclusion

All aspects and emotions present in the narrative of YOUR LIE IN APRIL required no alteration of Chopin's first ballade. The music encapsulates tragedy through use of topics such as *ombra* and *tempesta* in the minor sections, love through use of the waltz and nocturne, hope through a seemingly victorious secondary theme featuring apotheosis and structural closure in VI, and peripetia through a final return to G minor.

The use of Chopin's first ballade in G minor in the series finale of YOUR LIE IN APRIL features a marked incorporation of a complete classical work in which the animation and music are chronologically and topically correlated. Throughout the work, the scene changes in the animation are consistently tied to shifts in the musical form. For example, the onset of the closing theme correlates with a shift to the ethereal plane, the unusual placement of the secondary theme at the beginning of the recapitulation correlates with a surreal shift to pastel stills, and the onset of the coda correlates with a violent light exploding from Kaori's chest. Furthermore, these formal regions' musical topics relate to the scenes depicted in the animation. The closing theme's berceuse is associated with a dream realm, the recapitulation's apotheosis is associated with Kousei and Kaori's ostensible union, and the coda's *tempesta* topic is associated with darkness, flashes of light, and destruction. These correlations are even witnessed in smaller harmonic moments, in which mid-passage tonicizations of major and minor keys are correlated with scene changes. For

¹⁹ The following scene completely skips over Kaori's death and fast-forwards to her gravesite after her funeral.

example, the shifts between B^b major and G minor in the transition are linked with past images of a healthy Kaori and current images of an incapacitated Kaori, respectively (see Figure 5).

In fact, there are so many correlations between the music and animation that it is difficult to contemplate a piece that could maintain these musical–visual relationships without significant alterations to the animation. First, the anime could not replace the ballade with an original work because the narrative requires common-practice piano literature to fit the overall scene: a piano competition.²⁰ Second, an alternative would also require the unusual placement of the secondary theme in apotheosis at the beginning of the recapitulation to prolong the delusion of a victorious transgression. That is, the overall pool of viable works is greatly reduced because a prototypical tragic work features the minor-mode primary theme at the beginning of the recapitulation. Finally, any replacement would need to feature a similar sequence of topics to match the scene (e.g., the use of the berceuse to book-end the dreamlike state).

Therefore, we suggest *YOUR LIE IN APRIL* is an unusual example of a multimedia work where the animation and pacing of the narrative appears to be based on the music. The result is a dramatic unfolding of this series' tragic twist that aligns the structure of the music with the onscreen action. This elevates the music into the driver's seat, and lets it function as a narrative vehicle to drive the pace of the final episode, and ultimately convey the emotions being felt by the characters.

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²⁰ Prior to Kousei's performance, Scriabin's Op. 8, No. 12 is played by another contestant.

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