

# Musical parameters and synchronization in instrumental music AMVs

Lolita Melzer (6032052)  
Thesis MA Applied Musicology  
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University of Utrecht  
Supervisor: dr. Rebekah Ahrendt

# Abstract

AMVs or anime music videos have been created since the 1980s and are still being made by fans in the West who want to express their love for anime, or Japanese animation. The website [animemusicvideos.org](http://animemusicvideos.org) was established in 2000 and became a very important site for the AMV creators to upload their videos to and share them with other fans. The site hosts an annual competition called the Viewer's Choice Awards which features different categories where fans can submit their creative work to. In 2004, the contest added the category 'best use of instrumental music' which is aimed at AMVs with instrumental music as soundtrack. In most AMVs, the visuals are synchronized to the lyrics as they serve as a guide and are easier to edit to. Instrumental music usually does not include lyrics and thus seems more difficult to synchronize images to, as 'pure' music often lacks fixed meaning and reference, unlike lyrical music. Nowadays, the instrumental music category still exists, so how are the images connected to the music? If there are no lyrics, which musical parameters serve as a 'guide' for the AMV? In this thesis, I try to find answers to these questions by analysing the AMVs 'Dentelle' and 'You Make Me Smile' which both won the 'best use of instrumental music' category in 2018 and 2019 respectively. It turns out that these AMVs use instrumental music that have some lyrical references. 'Dentelle' is accompanied by Saint-Saëns' famous tone poem *Danse Macabre*, which has a title and a theme and thus some reference points. 'You Make Me Smile' is edited to the song 'Passionfruit' which has some samples with spoken words in it. However, most of the music is instrumental but it shows that it is possible to synchronize images to other musical parameters such as mood, tempo, sound, timbre, texture, melody, looping and phrasing as well.

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# Introduction: A historical overview of AMVs

Anime music videos or AMVs are a type of unofficial music videos, which is a subgenre of the music video. AMVs are different from other unofficial music videos because they use footage from anime series, which are Japanese animation series.<sup>1</sup> The music that accompanies the images in AMVs is often an American or European hit song, but it could also be J-pop or instrumental music.<sup>2</sup> AMV makers combine the footage and song to form a new story or to tell the story of an anime series in a different way. Most creators of AMVs are not professionals and make AMVs as a hobby.<sup>3</sup> AMVs often function as a form of promotion of anime series and thus play an important role in making the (sometimes unknown) series visible to anime fans.<sup>4</sup>

The craft of anime music videos in the West arose in the 1970s in the anime fandom of the United States.<sup>5</sup> During these years in Japan, fans were making video remixes called ‘MADs’ while fans in the USA were creating remixes of television footage by using analogue editing tools, a practice called ‘vidding’ and which took a lot of time and patience.<sup>6</sup> Anime was not very well known in the West and access to anime series was quite hard. This all changed when VCRs (videocassette recorders) were introduced in the early 1980s for the consumer, so anime fans overseas could get copies from tapes and distribute them to other fans. As technology developed, fans could even make their own subtitles to the tapes. Fans used the technology of tape distribution to make music videos as well and so the first AMVs were created in the early 1980s by using analogue video recorders.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the 1990s, technology improved further and gave fans possibilities to make better AMVs in a shorter

<sup>1</sup> Dana Milstein, "Case study: Anime music videos," in *Music, Sound and Multimedia*, ed. Jamie Sexton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Mizuko Ito, "'As long as it's not *Linkin Park Z'*: Popularity, Distinction, and Status in the AMV subculture," in *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, ed. Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe and Izumi Tsuji (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 288.

<sup>3</sup> Dana Springall, "Popular Music Meets Japanese Cartoons: A History of the Evolution of Anime Music Videos," Unpublished undergraduate Honors Thesis (Birmingham, Alabama: Samford University, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Ito, "As long as," 288-289.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Roberts, "Genesis of the Digital Anime Music Video Scene, 1990–2001," in "Fan/Remix Video," ed. Francesca Coppa and Julie Levin Russo, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 9 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0365>.

<sup>6</sup> Ito, "As long as," 282.

<sup>7</sup> Roberts, "Genesis."

time. These digital editing tools became widely accessible in the late 1990s, the time the AMV scene started to take off; before this, AMVs were mostly shown at underground clubs, but this would soon change.<sup>8</sup>

In the late 1990s, anime conventions started to host competitions for AMV makers which became very important in the growing AMV community.<sup>9</sup> These contests offer several categories such as drama, parody or action and AMV makers can upload their work to multiple categories at once. If they are chosen, makers would have an audience and the chance of winning an award, which would give the winner reputation and visibility in the AMV community. The AMVs that are shown at competitions are often of very high quality as they came through a selection round before they would be shown in front of hundreds or thousands of people.<sup>10</sup> The high level of technicality even increased as a result of the growing competition at the AMV contests. By 2001, the VCR era was already gone and exchanged for the digital era with digital tools that could make the crafting of AMVs easier and better. The AMV contests had become so big by then, that creators would start to collaborate with others on different projects as well as continuing to create their own AMVs.<sup>11</sup>

In 2000, the website animemusicvideos.org was established and became very important to the AMV community.<sup>12</sup> Before this site was launched, makers of AMVs uploaded their content to different independent websites or made their own websites to share their creations with other makers.<sup>13</sup> The animemusicvideos.org site, which is also called ‘the org’ by AMV makers, has a database for AMVs, many forums where fans can discuss AMVs and anime but also guides on how to make and evaluate an AMV.<sup>14</sup> Over time, the site has developed the mechanisms of giving feedback on videos. Viewers are allowed to give star rankings but they can also provide more detailed comments and mark videos as their favourite.<sup>15</sup> The website also hosts an annual competition called the Viewer’s Choice Awards

<sup>8</sup> Mizuko Ito, “‘As long as it’s not *Linkin Park Z*’: Popularity, Distinction, and Status in the AMV subculture,” in *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, ed. Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe and Izumi Tsuji (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 282.

<sup>9</sup> Ito, “As long as,” 281.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 275-276.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Roberts, “Genesis of the Digital Anime Music Video Scene, 1990–2001,” in “Fan/Remix Video,” ed. Francesca Coppa and Julie Levin Russo, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 9 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0365>.

<sup>12</sup> Ito, “As long as,” 281.

<sup>13</sup> Roberts, “Genesis,” and Ito, “As long as,” 281.

<sup>14</sup> Roberts, “Genesis,” and Ito, “As long as,” 281-285.

<sup>15</sup> Ito, “As long as,” 291.

for best video in different categories.<sup>16</sup> Further, the site features lists of the biggest AMV contests online and on anime conventions, including an archive of all the winners.<sup>17</sup> While the org is still a very important site for AMV creators, viewers have also turned to other and more accessible platforms such as YouTube or Vimeo.<sup>18</sup> Nowadays, YouTube is one of the biggest video platforms on the Internet and even states millions of videos when someone inserts the search term ‘AMV’.<sup>19</sup>

Over time, lots of AMVs have been made of all different kinds, but what makes an AMV really good and gets them to win an award at a contest, or many views on YouTube? There are some different views on this but they also share some similarities. According to AMV creator Matthew Lewis, to become a good AMV remixer, one should watch many AMVs to get inspiration for the technical part and effects. He writes that ‘Watching AMVs helps with working out personal preferences and dislikes with respect to video effects, transition effects, sequence editing, synching between images, music and lyrics, and so on.’<sup>20</sup> Further, he states that the match between a song and the anime is crucial and has to make some sense.<sup>21</sup> Dana Millstein mentions three approaches by which AMVs could be categorised: the first is storytelling, which is telling a new story or the story of the original anime series but with a twist, for example; the second is exploratory, which refers to the message the creator wants to convey through the video; and the third is called examination, which focuses on character development.<sup>22</sup>

When it comes to quality AMVs and the connections between sound and image, synchronization is a very important aspect. According to Dana Springall, almost all AMV makers try to synchronize the images to the lyrics and their literal meaning, as the lyrics serve as a guide and help make the AMV flow better with clear reference points. Applying the visuals to the lyrics in this way can serve more cohesivity.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Dana Milstein, "Case study: Anime music videos," in *Music, Sound and Multimedia*, ed. Jamie Sexton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 36.

<sup>17</sup> Mizuko Ito, “As long as it’s not *Linkin Park Z*: Popularity, Distinction, and Status in the AMV subculture,” in *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, ed. Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe and Izumi Tsuji (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 291.

<sup>18</sup> Ito, “As long as,” 282.

<sup>19</sup> Michele Knobel, Colin Lankshear, and Matthew Lewis, "AMV Remix: Do-it-yourself anime music videos," in *DIY Media: Creating, Sharing and Learning with New Technologies*, ed. Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 211.

<sup>20</sup> Knobel, Lankshear and Lewis, “AMV Remix,” 212-213.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>22</sup> Milstein, "Case study," 33-34.

<sup>23</sup> Dana Springall, “Popular Music Meets Japanese Cartoons: A History of the Evolution of Anime Music Videos,” Unpublished undergraduate Honors Thesis (Birmingham, Alabama: Samford University, 2004). 1.

In 2004, animemusicvideos.org added another category to the Viewer's Choice Awards, called 'best use of instrumental music'. Instrumental music includes no singing and thus no lyrics, so are these AMVs less cohesive? For her dissertation, Springall interviewed some AMV creators about this topic and the answers were diverse. One AMV maker expressed that instrumentals serve more flexibility with editing and more freedom. Another AMV creator told Springall that since there are no lyrics and no lip synching, it is a lot more difficult. However, the last creator she spoke to said that 'Since there are no lyrics, it forces you to listen to the phrases and verses of the song, and what the music in itself is trying to say.'<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, Springall did not elaborate on this topic of AMVs and instrumental music and neither has there been done any other research on this topic so far, especially not in the field of musicology. Hence, this thesis aims to examine this more by answering questions such as to what musical parameters the images are synchronized, as normally there are no lyrics included; what kind of instrumental music is used and how this instrumental music is or can be interpreted in AMVs. The thesis is divided into three chapters which try to answer these questions. In the first chapter, a theoretical frame is presented which consists of the subsections instrumental music and meaning, synchronization, musical parameters and music video, and the methodology. In the first section I discuss the ability of instrumental music to express meaning by looking at what other authors such as Werner Wolf, Leo Samama and Claudia Gorbman have written on this subject. I will be looking at instrumental or absolute music, and film music as examples. The second section revolves around the audio-visual phenomenon of synchronization, a very important aspect of AMVs as it serves a connection between the images and the music. I explain some important theories about synchronization by Michel Chion, Lea Jacobs and Kevin Donnelly and how they are applied to AMVs. In the third section, some of the most common musical parameters that can be reflected in music videos are explained with examples from Carol Vernallis and Mathias Korsgaard and in the last section I describe the techniques that I use when analysing two case studies.

The second and third chapters revolve around two case studies that I analyse. The two AMVs that I analyse have won the category 'best use of instrumental music' of the Viewer's Choice Awards. This contest is organised by the website animemusicvideos.org, which is still very important and prestigious to many AMV makers who receive reputation and an award

<sup>24</sup> Dana Springall, "Popular Music Meets Japanese Cartoons: A History of the Evolution of Anime Music Videos," unpublished undergraduate Honors Thesis (Birmingham, Alabama: Samford University, 2004). 1.

when they win. It is interesting to see why these AMVs have won the category and thus how they succeed in making AMVs with the more ‘difficult’ instrumental music.

I have chosen to include two AMVs so I can share more detailed analyses and show precisely how instrumental music videos use synchronization and how they serve cohesivity. Moreover, musical detailed analyses of AMVs are seldom included in research on anime music videos. Thus, by performing close-analyses, I aim to fill this gap.

The two AMVs that I analyse are ‘You Make Me Smile’, the winner of 2019 and ‘Dentelle’, the winner of the year before. It is especially interesting to compare these two as they both include instrumental music but each of a very different kind. ‘You Make Me Smile’ uses a rather unknown song, ‘Passionfruit’, by the not very well-known artist Raptures of Lovers while ‘Dentelle’ uses the famous *Danse Macabre* from nineteenth-century composer Camille Saint-Saëns. Because of its fame, the *Danse Macabre* already has some extra-musical associations to it, next to its title, which is a characteristic of program music. Therefore, the AMV maker already has some references when making an AMV. ‘Passionfruit’ on the contrary is not well-known and thus has no pre-associations; the maker can only add their own associations to the music. However, ‘Passionfruit’ does have some samples with spoken lines and these can also serve as a literal guideline through the video. Unlike pop songs, these instrumental music pieces do not include lyrics all over though, so there must be other musical parameters that serve as reference points. What these musical parameters are, I aim to investigate in this thesis.

# Chapter one: Theoretical framework

## Instrumental music and meaning

AMVs are a form of remix or mash up, as they consist of different clips from one or more anime series stitched together. They are a form of ‘vidding’, a remix genre in which fans make their own videos by combining clips from TV series or films that they love.<sup>25</sup> As with vids, most AMVs are edited to popular music with vocals and lyrics, which seem to be quite important to AMV creators as they try to match the lyrics with the images. The reason for this is that ‘They do this to help the AMV flow better, since the people have something to refer to. For some videos, it helps viewers to follow the story the AMV creator is trying to tell. For others, the lyrics serve as a guideline to help creators pick the footage they want to use.’<sup>26</sup> As popular songs have a title and lyrics which one can refer to when creating a video, instrumental music often does not have this, especially ‘pure’ instrumental or absolute music, and more specifically classical Western music.<sup>27</sup> Another option would be to synch to the beats, which is something that most videos do, but to do this for the whole video, would probably be one-sided. Moreover, according to Kalium’s guide, ‘To ignore the music itself is generally considered extremely bad form. (...) Without extremely good reason, such as comedy, the video ending, etc., missing a significant change in the music is considered a major slip-up on the part of the editor.’<sup>28</sup> In instrumental music, there should be enough musical parameters the images can respond to, but without lyrics, it might be hard to choose clips that are representative of the music. Werner Wolf agrees that it can be difficult to represent some musical aspects as he writes: ‘Music is a predominantly self-referential, rather than hetero-referential, medium: motives, themes, melodies within a given composition refer first and foremost to each other and their repetitions and variations, rather than to some extra-

<sup>25</sup> Tischa Turk, “Transformation in a New Key: Music in Vids and Vidding,” *Music and the Moving Image* 9, no. 2 (Autumn 2015): 163.

<sup>26</sup> Dana Springall, “Popular Music Meets Japanese Cartoons: A History of the Evolution of Anime Music Videos” (unpublished undergraduate Honors Thesis, Samford University, 2004), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Werner Wolf, “Transmedial Narratology: Theoretical Foundations and Some Applications (Fiction, Single Pictures, Instrumental Music),” *Narrative* 25, no. 3 (October 2017): 272.

<sup>28</sup> Kalium, “Synch,” Kalium’s AMV Theory Primer, accessed June 12, 2020, <http://www.animemusicvideos.org/guides/kalium/index.html>.

musical content.’<sup>29</sup> Leo Samama agrees that music is not able to transmit concrete linguistic meanings and that its meanings are often ambiguous, but he does see music as a language. A language that makes use of musical generalities, such as ‘a descending chromatic line for suffering or death.’<sup>30</sup> Wolf agrees that despite its lack of fixed meaning compared to linguistics, music can still create extra-musical reference, which he calls ‘diagrammatic iconicity’: ‘Rapid scales may appear as a correlative of rapid movements, a rising melody may suggest the idea of being uplifted, a falling melody or a slow rhythm may evoke a fall, decay, or weariness.’<sup>31</sup> As it shows, these extra-musical references do not have fixed meanings and thus could mean multiple things, or as Simon McKerrell and Lyndon Way write: ‘Rising pitches do not always signify increasing tension; thickly textured musical sound does not always connote semiotic complexity; loud sounds often imply something very public, but not always; and people understand vocal timbre and meaning in many different and contradictory ways across the globe.’<sup>32</sup> McKerrell and Way also explain the reason for this: ‘Our bodies are cultured; we feel music in different ways according to class, gender, ethnicity, race, place and personal experience.’<sup>33</sup> So, it is up to the AMV creator to decide which meaning they prefer. Thus, music is able to create meaning, even multiple meanings, however not as concrete as linguistics does, but musical generalities and diagrammatic iconicity might help. However, there is one aspect that music can evoke quite powerfully, perhaps even more than words can do, and these are emotions and affective meaning.<sup>34</sup> Or as Samama nicely writes: ‘What you can no longer access with your mind or with words, music can make comprehensible to your feelings.’<sup>35</sup> In films, music is often instrumental and used to underline or reinforce emotions. Claudia Gorbman writes that ‘Music enters to satisfy a need to compensate for, fill in, the emotional depth not verbally representable,’<sup>36</sup> and further on in the book *Unheard Melodies*: ‘soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasize particular emotions suggested in the narrative, but first and foremost it is a signifier of

<sup>29</sup> Werner Wolf, “Transmedial Narratology: Theoretical Foundations and Some Applications (Fiction, Single Pictures, Instrumental Music),” *Narrative* 25, no. 3 (October 2017): 272.

<sup>30</sup> Leo Samama, *The Meaning of Music*, trans. Dominy Clements (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 43.

<sup>31</sup> Wolf, “Transmedial Narratology,” 272.

<sup>32</sup> Simon McKerrell and Lyndon C.S. Way, *Music as Multimodal Discourse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 13.

<sup>33</sup> McKerrell and Lyndon, *Music*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Samama, *The Meaning of Music*, 47.

<sup>36</sup> Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 67.

emotion itself.’<sup>37</sup> Aaron Copland, a film composer himself, also mentions emotions as part of one of the functions that music can fulfil in films. He calls this function ‘underlining psychological refinements’, which refers to ‘The unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of a situation. Music can play upon the emotions of the spectator, sometimes counterpointing the thing seen with an aural image that implies the contrary of the thing seen.’<sup>38</sup> This last sentence seems to refer to asynchrony in the first place, but it can also add another meaning to the image, which is explained further in the next section.

While music videos do not share exactly the same principles as most Hollywood films do – the images in music video are created or combined after the music is composed; music is not composed for the images, so the visuals interpret the music – they still share some similarities. The most important one probably is that instrumental music in music videos can also evoke emotions and set the mood of the video. In AMVs, or in anime series in general, emotion is also very important and even forms a third type of synchronization which is called ‘mood synch’.<sup>39</sup> So, when words lack, mood can function as a guide through the AMV, as is shown in the analyses in the next chapters.

## **AMVs and synchronization**

According to Kalium’s general guide to basic AMV theory, ‘synch’ is the most important technical aspect in AMVs. Synch is the abbreviation of synchronization, which means that the audio and the visual should be connected in some way.<sup>40</sup> In animated cartoons, synchronization is quite common and has existed since the early days of animation from Disney. The term that is used for the tight synchronisation between visual movement and rhythm, is called ‘mickey mousing’ and is also used as a reference for the musical imitation of physical movement, such as a glissando when a character slides down. In general, the term can also be used for any tight integration of music and/or sounds, for example a bass note that

<sup>37</sup> Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 73.

<sup>38</sup> Aaron Copland, "Tip to moviegoers: Take off those ear-muffs," *New York Times* 6 (1949): 28-32.

<sup>39</sup> Kalium, "Synch," Kalium’s AMV Theory Primer, accessed June 12, 2020, <http://www.animemusicvideos.org/guides/kalium/index.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Kalium, "Synch."

represents a frog's croak.<sup>41</sup> In AMVs, this tight synchronization or 'mickey mousing' is most often applied.

Michel Chion, one of the first authors who has written about synchronization, argues that this phenomenon exists by simultaneous vertical relationships, which are enabled by the principle of 'synchresis', a neologism formed by the words synchronization and synthesis. Synchresis is 'the forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears,' and this consists of so called 'synch points', in which 'a sound event and a visual event meet in synchrony.'<sup>42</sup> In AMVs, these synch points are very important, because 'Without synch, you have anime, and you have music, but no real connection between them.'<sup>43</sup> Or as Kevin Donnelly puts it: 'The absolute essence of sound film is the synchronization of image and sound at key moments that hold together the film experience.'<sup>44</sup>

Donnelly thus argues that synchronization is the *essence* of audio-vision, but there could also be moments of asynchrony integrated.<sup>45</sup> Asynchrony is almost the opposite of synchronization as it refuses the moment of synchronization.<sup>46</sup> Donnelly states that 'there are plenty of points where visuals and sound do not match directly, sometimes only vaguely, and sometimes in a manner that is not immediately apparent.'<sup>47</sup> He writes that film consists of moments of synchronization that are alternated by moments of asynchrony, that return back to synchronization.<sup>48</sup> However, too much asynchrony is not preferred in film: 'The synchronization of sound and image constitutes a drama of play between order and chaos, or perhaps between safety and uncertainty. Asynchrony threatens to pull apart the contract of film's illusion of sound and visual unity into a miasma of disparate and potentially meaningless elements.'<sup>49</sup> This means that synchronization between image and sound remains very important for the illusion of unity or the film experience, and this also applies to AMVs.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Lea Jacobs, *Film Rhythm after Sound: Technology, Music, and Performance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 1-3.

<sup>42</sup> Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 40, 58 and 63.

<sup>43</sup> Kalium, "Synch," Kalium's AMV Theory Primer, accessed June 12, 2020, <http://www.animemusicvideos.org/guides/kalium/index.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Kevin J. Donnelly, *Occult Aesthetics: Synchronization in Sound Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9.

<sup>45</sup> Donnelly, *Occult Aesthetics*, 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Mathias Korsgaard argues that music video is an important medium for audio-visual studies and should be studied by looking at the audio-visual relations and not only the visual or the audio.<sup>51</sup> Like Donnelly, he mentions that ‘the relation between sound, image, and the other elements is not necessarily one of synesthetic harmony but sometimes also one of dissociation,’ and so ‘synchronization is not always the order of the day.’<sup>52</sup> He states that images can merely illustrate the music without adding a new meaning; that images can add a new meaning to the music; and that images and music can contradict each other.<sup>53</sup> This means that a synch point is not always a combination of sound and image that each have the same meaning. For example, when we hear a gunshot, and we see something else but a gun, the image and sound do not have the same message but together they can create a new meaning. In AMVs, synchronization between image and sound that each have the same meaning is mostly applied, but with instrumental music, there are multiple meanings possible so it could be hard sometimes to speak of synchronization when it comes to meaning. In the analyses, I do mention synchronization, by which I mean that an image and a sound appear at the same time (as Chion explains) or seem to belong together based on earlier associations.

## **Musical parameters in music video**

According to Kalium, the visuals in AMVs can be synchronized to the beat, which is also called ‘cutting on the beat’; to the lyrics, such as showing the literal or symbolic meaning of the words or lip synching, and to mood. This last subcategory refers to applying synchronization to the mood and emotions that are evoked by the music. Mood is more of an umbrella-term for multiple musical parameters together, so it is not a very precise reference to music. The lyrical and beat synch are the most used forms of synchronization in AMVs, but in instrumental music, these forms seem not to be so applicable. So, what other musical elements or parameters can images be edited to? Carol Vernallis writes that in music video, almost any musical feature can be mimicked by the images and that images can focus our attention to different musical elements. She mentions that ‘A single image can also

<sup>51</sup> Mathias B. Korsgaard, *Music Video after MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 6-7.

<sup>52</sup> Korsgaard, *Music Video*, 64.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

underscore several musical parameters simultaneously.’<sup>54</sup> Mathias Korsgaard notes that in music video, the images are created to synchronize with the music; the music is visualised, but in this process, vision is also ‘musicalized’; this is something that he calls ‘the musicalization of vision’ which means that ‘the images of a music video are often structured musically,’ and is ‘a particular instance of audio-visual remediation where the images respond to musical parameters.’<sup>55</sup> Korsgaard has made up a list of musical parameters which can be reflected in music videos, such as rhythm, duration of notes, melody, textural, tonal and timbral features, tempo, intensity, figure-ground relations and looping.<sup>56</sup> Vernallis writes about similar musical parameters but also adds musical phrasing and instrumentation to her list. These musical parameters are also reflected in AMVs with instrumental music. Rhythm is mimicked by the images through ‘cutting on the beat’, whereby clips alter right in time with the beat, but it can also be musicalized through camera movement or movements of visual elements.<sup>57</sup> The duration of the notes often joins the rhythm, whereby the length of the clips synchronizes the duration of the notes, such as minims, quavers, semibreves, and breves. Images can also follow the melody; when there is a rising melodic line played, the video can show rising elements and when a melody is descending, visuals can show descending objects as well. However, this could also be interpreted on a deeper level, as I mentioned earlier, when a rising melody suggests a happy or carefree association and a descending line awakens a more sad and serious meaning. Textural, tonal, timbral features and instrumentation can correspond to visual textures, or to images showing the (intentional) source of the sound. Tempo often corresponds to the images in the same way intensity corresponds to the images. So, if the music is loud, images are ‘loud’ and bombastic as well, and when the musical tempo is fast, the images are also fast, for example in fast editing. With figure ground relations Korsgaard aims at the melody with its musical accompaniment. The figure thus refers to the melody and the ground to a rhythmic element which accompanies the melody. In music videos, this can be reflected by visual objects that move in time with the melody or follow the shape of a melody and other visual elements which follow the musical accompaniment, both within the same frame. Loopings and repetitions in music can be mimicked by visual

<sup>54</sup> Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 156.

<sup>55</sup> Mathias Korsgaard, *Music Video after MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 6. See also the list of musical parameters that can be visualised by the images, 65-69.

<sup>56</sup> Korsgaard, *Music Video*, 65-69.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

loopings, but also by doubled visual elements.<sup>58</sup> Musical phrasing at last can be reflected in images that follow the musical phrases, for example when a melody line ends, the visuals fade away or turn to black. But also peaks of phrases can correspond to peaks in the video or draw us to something which is important for the story or theme of the video.<sup>59</sup>

## Methodology

The first technique that I apply to the analyses, is making a schematic overview of the AMV. I do this by making a graph which shows the amount of clips that is displayed per second. I base this technique on a method that has been quite important in film studies as well, where it is called ‘average shot length’.<sup>60</sup> It is used for example in research studies by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, James Cutting, Kaitlin Brunick and Jordan DeLong, Brett Adams, Shitra Dorai and Svetha Venkatesh, and even for TV commercials by James MacLachlan and Michael Logan.<sup>61</sup> For the analyses, I apply similar graphs as in the study of Adams, Dorai and Venkatesh as this is the most clear method for the analyses. The one thing that is different is that I present the amount of clips per second, instead of how many seconds one clip takes. Throughout the analyses, I mention time stamps that refer back to the graph, which makes the analyses easier to follow. The reason for applying this technique to the AMV case studies, is because the clips are closely edited to the music (as I have explained earlier on), and thus when the amount of clips per second drastically changes, something in the music changes as well. What exactly changes, I aim to investigate. I would like to investigate what musical parameters serve the change; if it is just mood then what exact musical parameters serve this mood? Or is it tempo, or melody, or rhythm, or something else?

<sup>58</sup> Mathias Korsgaard, *Music Video after MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 66-68 and Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 165-67.

<sup>59</sup> Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 162-63.

<sup>60</sup> James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, and Jordan E. DeLong, “How Act Structure Sculpt Shot Lengths and Shot Transitions in Hollywood Film,” *Projections* 5, no. 1 (2011): 4.

<sup>61</sup> David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, Jordan E. DeLong, Catalina Iricinschi, and Ayse Candan, “Quicker, faster, darker: Changes in Hollywood film over 75 years,” *i-Perception* 2, no. 6 (2011): 569-576; Brett Adams, Chitra Dorai, and Svetha Venkatesh, “Study of shot length and motion as contributing factors to movie tempo,” *Proceedings of the eighth ACM international conference on Multimedia* (2000), 353-355; James MacLachlan and Michael Logan, “Camera shot length in TV commercials and their memorability and persuasiveness,” *Journal of Advertising Research* 33, no. 2 (1993): 57-62.

I also look at what is happening within the clips and to what musical parameters they respond. Korsgaard already has made a list of musical parameters that could be mimicked in music videos and Vernallis mentions similar musical parameters as well, so I refer to these. And as synch is very important to AMVs, I use the theory of synchronization by Michel Chion, such as synch points and synchresis to show how the musical parameters and the music are synchronized. Sometimes, the meaning of the connection between a sound and an image is not immediately clear, which is why I try to give an interpretation myself, based on the story of the anime series the AMV footage is derived from. Therefore, short descriptions of the anime series are also given as introductions to the analyses. Vernallis applies this interpretation method quite often to her own close analyses of music videos, which is called hermeneutics or the art of interpretation. The reason for this 'free' or more flexible method, is that instrumental music is often quite ambiguous and not very precise, and people can understand music differently and give different meanings to it. When interpreting the music and images, I try to stay as close to the story of the anime series as possible, but sometimes a more subjective interpretation is inevitable.

## Chapter three: A semi-instrumental song as AMV soundtrack

### *Tamako market* and the song ‘Passionfruit’

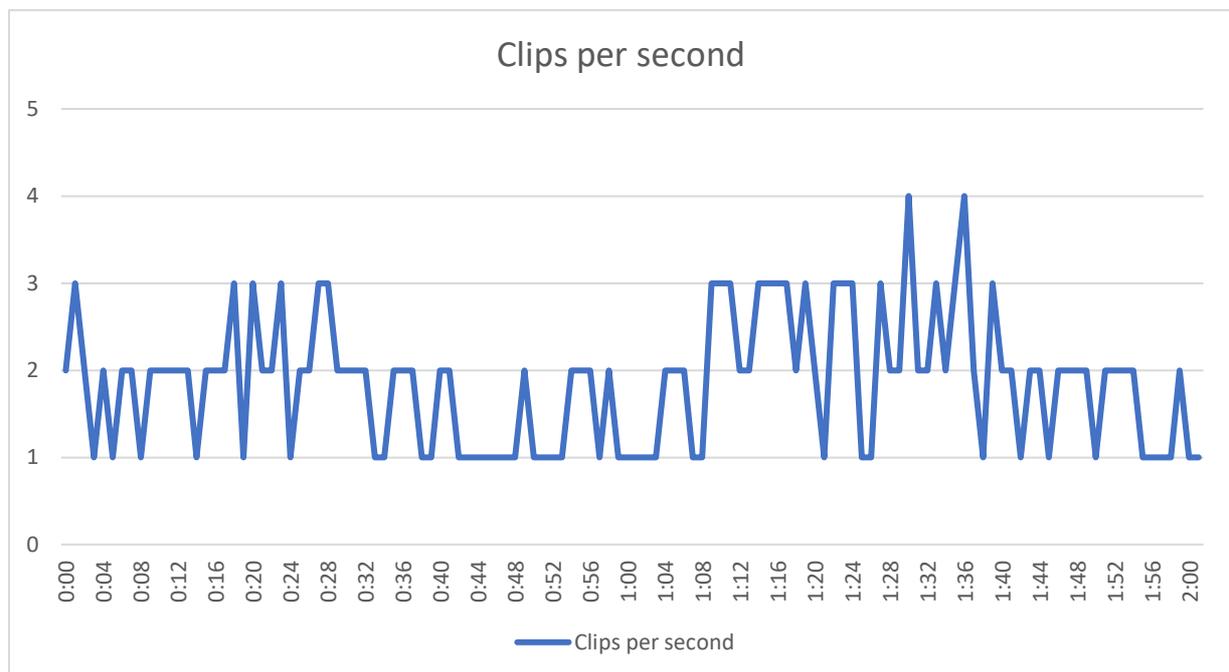
The AMV ‘You Make Me Smile’ by VideoBeats won the category for best use of instrumental music of the Viewer’s Choice Awards in 2019. The anime footage in the AMV is from the anime series *Tamako Market* and its sequel, the movie *Tamako Love Story*. The story revolves around a girl called Tamako Kitashirakawa, who is nearing the end of high school and wants to pull off a perfect baton performance at a marching festival. Her friends from the baton club all have big plans for the future, while Tamako stays working at her parents’ restaurant. Mochizou Ooji is also a high school student who has big plans to study in Tokyo. He is in love with Tamako and in order to reach his goal, he has to leave her behind, so he is struggling with confessing his feelings to her. Tamako also has a close friendship with her classmate and baton club member Midori Tokiwa, who is struggling with her own feelings for Tamako. This AMV focuses on the relationship between these two girls and brings its own version to the original series and movie.<sup>62</sup>

The song that accompanies the anime footage is ‘Passion fruit’ by Raptures of Lovers, which is a semi-instrumental song, as it includes some samples. The song has a 4/4 metre and the key is G major. The BPM is 95. The instruments that are used in this song are an electronic drum, glass marimba, acoustic guitar, strings and piano. Raptures of Lovers is a rather unknown band; on Spotify, the song ‘Passionfruit’ has around 5000 streams. The choice for this song thus seems quite unusual, so the AMV maker must have picked it up somewhere and decided to use it for an AMV based on the series *Tamako Market*. To most of the viewers, the song or the artist will not be very familiar, so there are no associations or expectations to how the images should respond to the music. This gives the AMV maker more freedom and creativity, but also more obstacles, as they have few guidelines.

<sup>62</sup> “Tamako Love Story”, MyAnimeList, accessed June 2, 2020, [https://myanimelist.net/anime/21647/Tamako\\_Love\\_Story](https://myanimelist.net/anime/21647/Tamako_Love_Story), and “Main Page”, The Tamako Market Wiki, accessed June 2, 2020, [https://tamakomarket.fandom.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://tamakomarket.fandom.com/wiki/Main_Page).

## An analysis of the AMV ‘You Make Me Smile’

When watching the AMV ‘You Make Me Smile’, one can notice that the clips change very fast and often fall precisely with the music; the musical structure is thus quite accurately mimicked by the amount of clips per second. In this AMV, there is a total amount of 229 different clips used which gives an average of 1,9 (2) clips per second. Sometimes, in one second, there could be even four clips shown. Figure 1 shows a diagram of the amount of clips used per second.



*Figure 1* Diagram with graph presenting the amount of clips edited per second in the AMV ‘You Make Me Smile’.

The diagram shows that the beginning of the video is quite fast with sometimes up to three clips per second. The anime music video starts with clips from girls serving a baton performance and these clips fall precisely with the notes played by the glass marimba and the beats from the electronic drum. The melody of the glass marimba and the beats lead the changing of clips here; it is as if the girls are dancing to the beat that is played. In some clips, the images correspond to the notes played by the glass marimba, while the beat is playing as well. 0:03 shows a clear example of this, where Midori stands in the middle of the group of girls and moves her head from right to left, precisely to the notes of the glass marimba. The movements of the batons correspond to the sound of the electronic drum and claps with

reverb effect; they fall precisely with the waving of the batons, which makes us feel that the sound is coming from the waving batons. This effect can be clearly seen when one slows down the video on YouTube. This is something that Chion would call *synchresis*, as the sound of the music (the beats) and the movements of the visuals (the batons) seem to match perfectly. This is shown in 0:09 for example, where Midori is waving her baton while she is at the gym and stops waving it exactly at the moment the clap of the beat stops. The musical parameters that the images correspond to in the opening thus are not only the rhythm, or the cutting on the beat, but also the sound of the instrument and reverb effect. This emphasis on the batons means that the baton plays a major role in the story of the anime; it is the main character's biggest passion and also that of her friend's, Midori. Their mutual passion for baton dancing has brought them together. From 0:13 to 0:20, there is a sample of a girl saying: 'I thought I... knew what I was going to say. Do you... I thought I planned it all out. Damn it,' and these words are lip synched by Midori. In this passage, we find out that there is more going on between Midori and Tamako, as they are often shown closely together.

Around 0:32, the fast changing of clips starts to slow down (see figure 1), due to a change of mood. From 0:30 to 0:45, chords by strings and piano are played. These instruments make their entrance at 0:30. They give more depth to the song and keep the balance with the lightness of the glass marimba and the acoustic guitar. In the images, until 0:30, we see a group of girls, who are friends, and one of the girls, Midori Tokiwa, practicing with her baton at the school gym and at home. As we see more close ups of her, we can notice that she has something on her mind; sometimes, she has a troubled look on her face. When at 0:30 the C-major chord by the piano and strings kicks in, we see the image of Midori, sitting on her bed, looking down and a bit sad at her teddy bear. The strings and piano give an extra layer, one of emotion, of feeling. Especially the strings playing joined semibreves and minims seem to guide this emotion; in 0:34, Midori lets her head hang down, right when the strings change chords from C-major to D-major. The D-major chord is the peak of the musical phrase and sounds more intense than the previous and the next chords. The step from C-major to D-major is one step higher, while the images show Midori's head hanging down. This can be perceived as asynchrony, as the visuals and sound move in opposite directions. This seems odd, but it can give a new layer of meaning to the video, as Korsgaard mentioned.<sup>63</sup> This new meaning could refer to the central theme of the video, as the musical phrase is at its peak. This central theme is Midori and her feelings and emotions. The deeper meaning of the emphasis

<sup>63</sup> Mathias Korsgaard, *Music Video after MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 64.

on this downward movement of Midori's head could be weariness, or despair: Midori could be tired of her struggle with her feelings or feel demotivated. The music in this fragment can also be perceived as film music, fulfilling Copland's film music function of 'underlining psychological refinements', whereby character's emotions or thoughts are reinforced by music.<sup>64</sup>



Images in the AMV 'You Make Me Smile', 0:30 – 0:40.

At 0:40, there is a clip of a Japanese glass wind bell shown which matches precisely the ringing E minor chord played by the glass marimba. One second later, at 0:41, there is a close up of another Japanese glass wind bell shown. This synchronization with the sound makes us believe that the source of the sound of the glass marimba is a glass wind bell in the AMV. The actual sound of this instrument resembles the glass marimba, so this is another example of the interpretation of the texture and timbre of the instrumental sound. Showing images of a glass wind bell together with a similar sound could have a symbolic meaning. In Japan, it is believed that the light sound of these bells brings refreshment to people in the hot summers. Through only hearing the light and high sound of the wind bell, people could feel more relaxed.<sup>65</sup> As for the story of the AMV, showing these bells together with the sound of the glass marimba, could be an emphasis on Japanese culture and tradition, or an indication of time, the summer, which is the end of a school season; as for Tamako and her friend's situation, it is the end of their high school time and the preparation for a student life in another city. But also the time to make some confessions, as Midori does in the AMV. Another meaning could be the balance; like in the music, the lightness of the glass sound brings

<sup>64</sup> Aaron Copland, "Tip to moviegoers: Take off those ear-muffs," *New York Times* 6 (1949): 28-32.

<sup>65</sup> "The Japanese Wind Bell Shop," Nihon Ichiban, accessed June 17, 2020, <https://anything-from-japan.com/home-kitchen/home-decoration/wind-chimes-wind-bells>

balance to the heaviness of the strings and piano; the lightness of the glass wind bell, which also resembles Tamako's kind and carefree personality, brings balance to the heaviness of Midori's emotions and struggles.<sup>66</sup>



*Figure 3* Images of Japanese glass wind bells from the AMV 'You Make Me Smile', 0:40 – 0:41.

Between 0:45 and 0:50, only the electronic drum is playing with kicks and claps and the rhythm is not very fast. The images show Tamako and Midori, a clip of Tamako only, then a clip of a plane in the sky with a flash of sun light that is synchronized with a clap on the second beat. This plane refers to the big future plans of Tamako's friends, who want to travel and study in the big cities.

From 0:51 to 0:53, there is one clip shown while there is no music, but a soft clanging that resembles the sound of the glass marimba and the glass wind bells. In the images, we see Tamako jumping on stones in the water to the tinkling sound. The minimalism of the music is thus mimicked by the images; it seems like a silence for something to come, something important or emotional, like a calm before the storm. And indeed, from 0:53 till 1:03, the 'emotional' strings return, together with a sample of a girl speaking. These words are lip synched by Midori and go: 'I can't explain, how you make me feel. Thinking about you it... it makes me smile.' The word 'smile' is mimicked by Midori, who also smiles when she says the word; this is an example of the literal interpretation of lyrics or words in this case and it is

<sup>66</sup> "Main Page" and "Tamako Kitashirakawa", The Tamako Market Wiki, accessed June 2, 2020, [https://tamakomarket.fandom.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://tamakomarket.fandom.com/wiki/Main_Page).

the sentence which the title of the AMV is derived from. It is around the middle of the AMV, the centre, and thus what the story of this AMV is about: Midori confessing her feelings to Tamako, which is a twist to the original story, in which Mochizou is the one confessing his feelings for Tamako.<sup>67</sup> This scene in the AMV is highly emotional with the strings and piano taking the lead once again, which can also be described as ‘mood’. Mark Brownrigg mentions that the combination of piano and strings is also very important in melodrama.<sup>68</sup> While originally a melodrama was used as a term for plays in which a predictable storyline was acted out with exaggerated emotion underscored by music, these days the term is used as a reference to a genre in which drama or emotion are important, together with fitting music.<sup>69</sup> Either way, emotions are central, which is also the case in the AMV ‘You Make Me Smile’. The changing of clips mimics the changing of chords played by the strings as well. The strings and piano play the same chord progression as before when they underscored images of Midori. The peak of the musical phrase, the D-major chord, accompanies an image of Tamako this time. Tamako is also a central character in the AMV and the intense D-major chord seems to underscore her emotions of surprise and realization as Midori is confessing. The peaks of this musical phrase played by the piano and strings thus seem to be the most emotional ones. The short and high notes played by the marimba that kick in at 1:02 bring more lightness to the heavy loaded situation and lead to the smile.

*Images: 0:53 – 1:03*



<sup>67</sup> “Midori Tokiwa”, Tamako Market Wiki, accessed May 28, 2020, [https://tamakomarket.fandom.com/wiki/Midori\\_Tokiwa](https://tamakomarket.fandom.com/wiki/Midori_Tokiwa).

<sup>68</sup> Mark Brownrigg, “Film Music and Film Genre,” (Unpublished PhD thesis, Stirling University, Scotland: 2003), 156.

<sup>69</sup>Jacky Bratton, "melodrama," In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*, Oxford University Press, 2003, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/view/10.1093/acref/9780198601746.001.0001/acref-9780198601746-e-2582>.



*Images: 1:04 – 1:09*



From 1:09 to 1:38, the changing of clips becomes faster, as the mood changes due to a faster rhythm (see figure 1). At 1:09, the clips fall precisely on the notes played by the cellos; the only instruments at that time. The notes are very short and so are the clips that go along with them; they thus correspond to the duration of the notes. The images show close-ups of Tamako. The clips that come after, show her as well and follow the glass marimba, which is playing fast arpeggios this time. In some of the clips, Tamako is walking, so the rhythm of the marimba and the acoustic guitar, which also plays fast arpeggios, could be interpreted as the rhythm or sound of someone walking.

♩ = 95

Glass Marimba

Acoustic Guitar

Cellos

*Images: 1:09 – 1:38*



Music notation of Glass Marimba, Acoustic Guitar and Cellos with corresponding images in AMV 'You Make Me Smile', 1:09 – 1:15.

Between 1:28 and 1:36, the musical tempo becomes even one fraction faster and the amount of clips increases to four at some seconds. Again, there are clips of Tamako, but this time she is running instead of walking, which synchronizes the increased tempo of the marimba, and when the acoustic guitar plays arpeggios, Tamako changes her tempo to hopping. It is as if she is running from what just happened, from Midori, to a safe and happy place to think things all over, but the running and hopping could also refer to Tamako's energetic and bubbly personality.

The clips of Tamako in her bedroom that appear at 1:39 match the last beats played before another mild part starts, with only a beat and the glass marimba playing E minor chords. The images show Tamako, watching through the window while it is raining outside. She remembers Midori holding her hand. When she is back at school, she is nervous to see Midori again, who shows up at the entrance of the classroom. After this, the last part of the AMV comes up and shows the two main characters, Tamako and Midori, who are finally together. The video ends with the four rising notes played by the marimba, and after that the credits kick in.

Overall, the video follows the musical structure quite accurately and matches the phrases and mood of the music. The first part, with the beats, glass marimba and acoustic guitar, sounds lightly and corresponds to the images of girls dancing with the baton, which is also a light object. When the strings and piano enter, the images take an emotional turn, with a focus on Tamako and Midori. This focus is emphasized in the middle of the video, with Midori's confession. After this, the images show Tamako especially, while the music becomes faster and the images show her running. The end part is led by the marimba and the beat, while the visuals show Tamako in her bedroom and at school, thinking about Midori. The AMV ends with the two girls being together, a happy ending, accompanied by a rising melody.

The AMV 'You Make Me Smile' has a linear story about Tamako and Midori and plays with different musical parameters. The many clips are often cut on the beat, but they also mimic other instruments and musical parameters. For example, the duration of the notes played by the strings, piano, glass marimba and acoustic guitar, is quite often synchronized with the duration of the clips. Another musical parameter that is in synch with the images is the sound or the texture and tone of it. The sound of the electronic drum, especially the claps with reverb, seems to be used as the sound of the waving batons, which is very clear when the video is slowed down. Also, the sound of the glass marimba is interpreted as the sound from a Japanese glass wind bell; the texture of glass and the sound of it is mimicked by the images. What is also striking, is the synchronization of lyrics or words in this case that are spoken in the samples. These words are very concrete and clear for the story of the AMV, but could the song then still be categorised as 'instrumental'? It is better called 'semi-instrumental', as the biggest part of the song is indeed instrumental, but the video also includes lip syncing. However, the analysis showed that except the cutting on the beat, the lip syncing and the literal interpretation of words, the images also correspond to the duration of notes, the texture, tone and sound of instruments, musical tempo and rhythm of instruments, musical phrases and mood.

## Chapter three: Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre* as AMV soundtrack

### Anime series *The Count of Monte Cristo* and Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*

The anime music video 'Dentelle' by Iren S.S. won the category for best instrumental music of the Viewer's Choice Awards in 2018. The footage is from the anime series *Gankutsuou: The Count of Monte Cristo*, which revolves around Frenchman Edmond Dantès, who becomes The Count of Monte Cristo, and Albert de Morcerf, who befriends him. It is a mixture of science fiction and the Fin de Siècle, as the story takes place in the year 5053 but has some historical French elements to it. Albert meets the count at a festival on the mooncity of Luna, which he attends with a friend, baron Franz d'Epinyay. Both are French aristocrats. As Albert and the count become friends, he introduces him to the French society, but the count sees an opportunity to finally take revenge on the people who have betrayed him years ago.<sup>70</sup> Back then, the count was Edmond, a sailor who worked for the rich French family Morrel. At one point, he married Mercedes, the woman he loved, but soon after he got separated from her as he was framed and sent to prison in the Château d'If. There he met the demon Gankutsuou or 'Ruler of the Cave'. Edmond lets the demon possess him to gain strength for his revenge and this way he becomes the Count of Monte Cristo.<sup>71</sup>

The music that accompanies the AMV is the *Danse Macabre* op. 40 by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. When he was inspired by pictures of death and dancing skeletons and a poem by Henri Cazallis (1840-1909), he first wrote a song based on poem lines and the Dance of Death theme. Saint-Saëns then expanded the song to a 'poème symphonique' or tone poem for orchestra in 1874, with the violin taking on most of the vocal parts.<sup>72</sup> The key is G minor and it has a 3/4 'waltz' time. The musical piece is a form of program music. Program music is a form of instrumental music but is also a bit different as it

<sup>70</sup> "Gankutsuou", MyAnimeList, accessed June 1, 2020, <https://myanimelist.net/anime/239/Gankutsuou>.

<sup>71</sup> "The Count of Monte Cristo", Gankutsuou Wiki, accessed June 1, 2020, [https://duo.fandom.com/wiki/The\\_Count\\_Of\\_Monte\\_Cristo](https://duo.fandom.com/wiki/The_Count_Of_Monte_Cristo).

<sup>72</sup> Joe Henken, "Danse Macabre Camille Saint-Saëns," Philpedia, LA Phil, accessed August 16, 2020, <https://www.laphil.com/philpedia/music/danse-macabre-camille-saint-saens>.

includes a title and reached out to other arts, especially literature, which resulted in tone poems, character pieces, programmatic symphonies and tone paintings.<sup>73</sup> Apart from its title and theme, Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre* is very famous and thus already has certain meanings and associations; it is used before as soundtrack to several images about death or evil creatures, such as an episode of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* and an early cartoon of Walt Disney called 'The Skeleton Dance'. Besides, The *Danse Macabre* is often perceived as one of 'Halloween's Haunting Anthems', just like Franz Liszt's *Totentanz* from 1849, which inspired Saint-Saëns as well.<sup>74</sup> The AMV maker of 'Dentelle' thus already had some associations when matching the anime series to the orchestral piece, but exactly what images did they pick to synchronize to which musical parameters? This is explored in the next section in the analysis of 'Dentelle'.

**An analysis of the AMV 'Dentelle'**

In the AMV 'Dentelle', the total amount of clips is 296, which gives an average of 1,48 (1) clips per second. Figure 2 displays a diagram of the amount of clips per second over the course of the AMV.

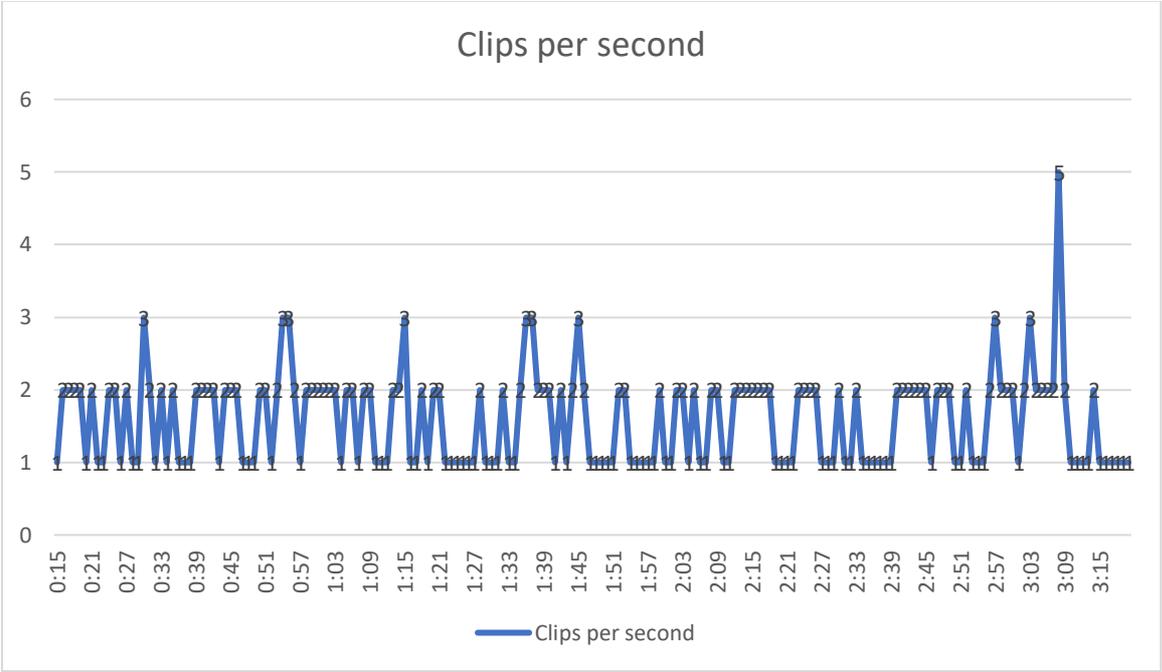


Figure 2 Diagram with graph presenting the amount of clips used per second for the AMV 'Dentelle'.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Kregor, *Cambridge Introductions to Music: Program Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1.

<sup>74</sup> David Guion, "Danse Macabre by Camille Saint-Saëns," *Musicology for Everyone*, posted February 5, 2018, <https://music.allpurposeguru.com/2018/02/danse-macabre-camille-saint-saens/>.

The diagram shows that the counting starts at 0:15, which is where the actual video begins. Before that, the music is already playing but the images only show the name of the AMV maker and the AMV, as a sort of introduction. The course of the amount of clips resembles the diagram for ‘You Make Me Smile’, only the video is more than one minute longer. The structure also shows a fast first part with sometimes three clips per second, followed by a milder part, with only one or two clips per second. After that, there is a fast passage again and then an outlier of five clips in one second. The video concludes with one and two clips per second, just as in the beginning.

From 0:15 to 0:30, the lead violin plays a solo and the clips are edited to the rhythm of the notes played. The first image of the video shows the eyes of a creature, which is probably the demon *Gankutsuou*; the demon awakens, together with the violin, which has a scary sound because of the tritone it plays. The violin has a *scordatura* tuning whereby its E-string is lowered to E-flat to play the interval.<sup>75</sup> The tritone, the interval of a diminished fifth, is also called the *diabolus in musica* or the ‘devil’s interval’ during the Middle Ages as it had an unpleasant sound and thus was mostly avoided.<sup>76</sup> So, images of a demon seem to match the devil’s interval quite well. Other images edited on the notes show a spaceship and different colours, which looks cosmic and refers to space, where the story takes place. At 0:20 and 0:21, there is the same clip showing colours while the rays of these colourful lights are in synch with the rhythm of the violin. It is as if the viewer is going through a tunnel of light with the spaceship, into the universe and story of the count. On 0:22, there is even an explosion of light, which forms a synch point with the last two chords played by the violin and other string instruments (violins, altos, violoncellos, double basses, harp), D-major and G-minor.

<sup>75</sup> Joe Henken, “Danse Macabre Camille Saint-Saëns,” Philpedia, LA Phil, accessed August 16, 2020, <https://www.laphil.com/philpedia/music/danse-macabre-camille-saint-saens>.

<sup>76</sup> David Guion, “Danse Macabre by Camille Saint-Saëns,” Musicology for Everyone, posted February 5, 2018, <https://music.allpurposeguru.com/2018/02/danse-macabre-camille-saint-saens/>.

Music notation: 0:15 – 0:22

The musical score for the segment 0:15-0:22 is presented in a multi-staff format. On the left, the parts for Timbale (Timb.), Violon solo (vln solo), and a string section (indicated by a brace) are shown. The Violon solo part begins with a series of chords marked with a forte 'f' dynamic and includes 'pizz.' (pizzicato) markings. The string section also has 'pizz.' markings. On the right, the parts for 1st Flute (1<sup>o</sup> Fl.) and Harp (Harpe) are shown. The 1st Flute part features a melodic line marked with a piano 'p' dynamic. The Harp part features chords marked with a piano 'p' dynamic.

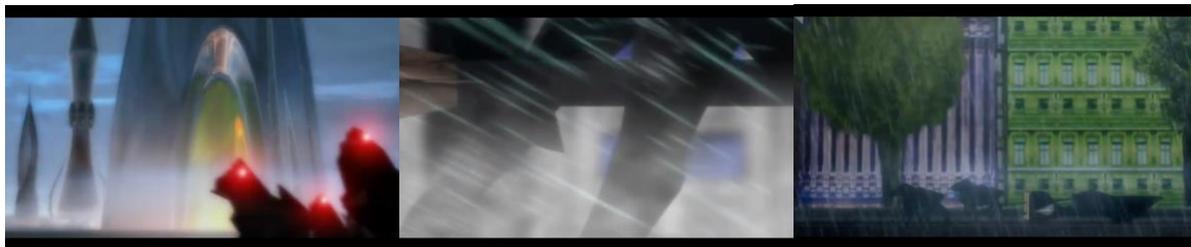
Images: 0:15 – 0:22



In the next passages, from 0:23 to 0:28, the flutes play staccato notes and the harp plays chords. In the visuals, the count of Monte Cristo is walking and from 0:28, the first and second violins take over the lead which sounds more threatening. The clips also alter more quickly with an outlier of three clips per second at 0:30 (see figure 2). We see a spaceship flying at the rhythm of the violins and rain falling together with the violin notes. In the clips that come after, we see a space carriage being pulled by mechanical horses with the count inside. The count has to get somewhere fast, as the horses are running to the fast rhythm of the strings.

Music notation: 0:28 – 0:32

Images: 0:28 – 0:32



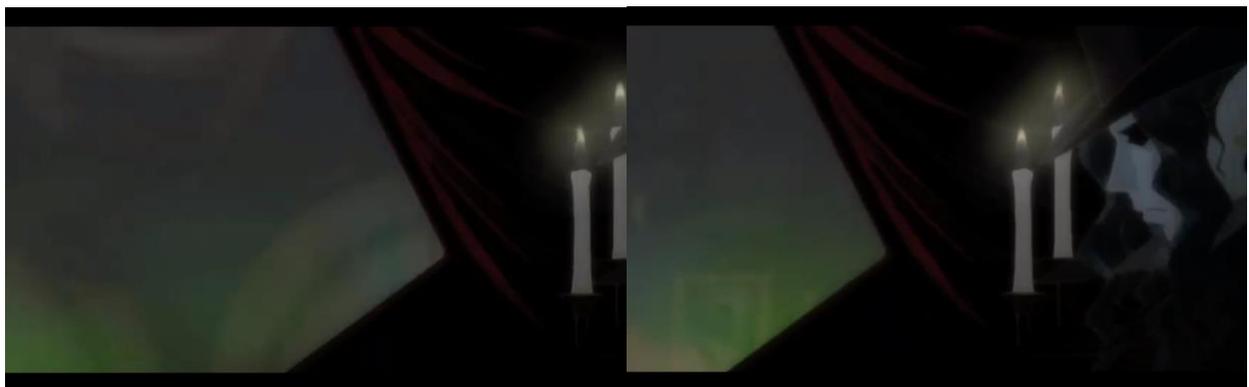
Between 0:33 and 0:35, we see a clip of the count sitting in the carriage while the window shows the passing environment. This clip relates to two different musical tracks at once, or the ‘figure ground relations’, as Korsgaard mentions. By this he refers to the melody (figure) and its accompaniment (ground).<sup>77</sup> The fast passing of the environment corresponds to the fast rhythm of the strings while the slower movement of the carriage mimics the dotted minims played by the oboes and the altos. An interpretation of this could be that time, which corresponds to the environment, is moving fast or just as it goes, while the count has a feeling that time is moving very slow, as he is imprisoned and separated from the one he loves.

<sup>77</sup> Mathias Korsgaard, *Music Video after MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 67.

Music notation: 0:33 – 0:35

The image shows a musical score for a short segment. The top staff is labeled 'Horns' and contains a bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a melodic line with quarter notes and rests, with a slur under the first two measures. Below this are four staves for strings. The first two staves are in treble clef, showing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The third staff is in alto clef, showing sustained chords with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) marking in the third measure. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains rests.

Images: 0:33 – 0:35



From 0:36, the solo violin plays the well-known melody, while in the images the count shows an opening of what turns out to be a guillotine. After this, images of candles and an interior follow. The music in this passage has a *largamente* (broadly) tempo and the visuals are also quite relaxed, with the count browsing through a book in which he sees a picture of his wedding and starts to memorize his past with his wife back then. The music in this passage is thus interpreted as nostalgic and relaxed.

*Music notation: 0:36 – 0:48*



*Images: 0:44 – 0:47*



At 0:49, the oboes and bassoons play a faster rhythm with arpeggios and quaver notes and the clips alter quicker (see figure 2). The count is shuffling cards and at 0:50 and 0:51, there are even images shown of drums, while in the music we hear timpani playing crotchets. The implied source of the sound, the instruments, is thus shown in the visuals; the sound of the timpani is interpreted as the sound of drums.

*Music notation: 0:50 – 0:51*



*Images: 0:50 – 0:51*



At 0:52, there is a synch point formed by the cadence played by the oboes, bassoons, and clarinets and the image of a flashlight, right when the chord is struck. From 0:53, the solo violin plays arpeggios as well and is indicated by *marcatissimo* (accented) in the music sheet. The images show the count fighting, which looks like sword play. On 0:56, the oboes, clarinets and bassoons play the same melody as before. In the video, we see handprints appearing, at the same time the quavers are played; with every note, a new handprint appears. There are also some colourful patterns shown which alter to the changing of notes and serve a kaleidoscopic effect. Again, the chord on which the melody ends, the cadence, corresponds to a flash of light shown in the video. At 1:02, the violin playing tritones returns with an altered rhythm. The count himself reappears, showing an evil look on his face, which reminds of the

demon from the beginning, when the violin was also playing the ‘devil’s interval’. This dissonant interval is thus interpreted as a symbol or soundtrack of evilness, or something bad. The grand cadence on 1:05 which almost all other instruments form, is mimicked in the images by an explosion of light when the knife of the guillotine from before falls down. The gliding movements of the knife correspond to the duration of notes and the scraping sound of the violin. It is as if the sound of the violin comes from the moving knife, which is the ‘synchresis’ effect. The guillotine could be a symbol for past France, as the story of the anime series has a lot of references to the France of the Fin de Siècle. But it could also symbolize death, the death of the count’s past identity of Edmond, or an omen of his coming death. The sound of the violin is thus synched to different images; to evil creatures on the one hand, and to the guillotine on the other. In this passage, the intensity or loudness (*forte*) of the music is also represented in the video when the cadence is struck but also the duration of the notes is reflected.

*Music notation: 1:04 – 1:05*

The image displays a musical score for a symphony orchestra, covering the time interval 1:04 to 1:05. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a grand cadence at the end of the passage. The instruments included are:

- 1<sup>ste</sup> Vl. (Violin I)
- 2<sup>de</sup> Vl. (Violin II)
- H<sup>b</sup> (Horn)
- Cl. (Clarinet)
- Bass. (Bassoon)
- Cors. (Trumpet)
- Tromp. (Trumpet)
- Tromb. et Tuba (Trombone and Tuba)
- Timb. (Timpani)
- Trg. (Triangle)
- Cymb. (Cymbal)

The score shows a grand cadence at the end of the passage, with the violin playing a long, gliding note that corresponds to the duration of the cadence. The intensity of the music is marked as *forte* (f) throughout the passage.

von solo

ff

arco

pizz.

arco

pizz.

arco

arco

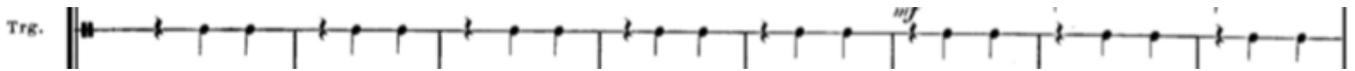
ff arco

*Images: 1:04 - 1:05*



After this, the music becomes more intense. The triangle is heard quite well and at 1:06, the visuals show coins that are falling out of a burning hand. The coins and the sound of the triangle seem to match in this passage; the texture and sound of the triangle are mimicked by the images. The coins could refer to richness, to the wealthy aristocrats who form the target of the count's revenge.

*Music notation: 1:06*



*Images: 1:06*



The clips that come next show different kinds of things, such as birds that are flying upwards, right when the violins start to play the arpeggios one note higher, and skeletons and other figures that are dancing. The dancing skeletons seem to be a reflection of the theme of the *Danse Macabre*, which is inspired on pictures of dancing skeletons. At 1:16, there is a clip with a door that opens to another but similar looking door. In this clip, different parts of the images correspond to different tracks of the music. The chords that are played by almost all the instruments at the same time on the first beat of every measure correspond to the door, which comes at the viewer and opens when the chords are played; it is the opening of a new measure and a new image. The rhythm of the melody played by the piccolo, flute, oboes and clarinets is mimicked by the butterflies, which are circling around the door. Flutes are often connected to birds or to lightness and flutter, hence why they seem to match the butterflies.

Music notation: 1:16 – 1:18

The image displays a page of musical notation for a symphony orchestra, covering measures 1:16 to 1:18. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Pic Fl.** (Piccolo Flute): Treble clef, playing a melodic line with a *ten.* (tenuendo) marking.
- Gdes Fl.** (Grand Flute): Treble clef, playing a melodic line with a *ten.* marking.
- Cl.** (Clarinet in B-flat): Treble clef, playing a melodic line with a *ten.* marking.
- Bous.** (Bassoon): Bass clef, playing a melodic line.
- Cors.** (Horns): Treble clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Troqp.** (Trumpets): Treble clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Tromb. et Tuba.** (Trombones and Tubas): Bass clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Timb.** (Timpani): Bass clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Trg.** (Triangle): Treble clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Cymb.** (Cymbals): Treble clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Gr.C.** (Gong): Treble clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Harpe** (Harp): Grand staff (treble and bass clefs), playing a rhythmic accompaniment.

The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 4/4. The *ten.* markings indicate a sustained or tenuto effect for the woodwind parts.

*Images: 1:16 – 1:18*

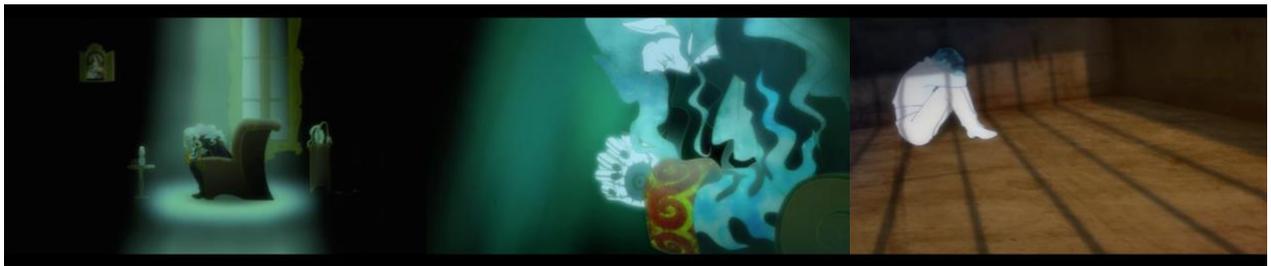


From 1:18 until 1:32, the tempo is again *largamente* and the flow of images is more relaxed. This is again a change in mood and the clips follow this change, as can be seen in the graph of figure 1.

At 1:40, the solo violin plays the lead and an image is shown of a pen writing French words. The movement of the pen follows the rhythm and tempo of the violin; it is as if it is writing the melody. At 1:48, there is another grand cadence which is illustrated by the images. After this nothing is shown, which is according to the minimalism of the music; a period of rest. In 1:51, the middle part or bridge of the music and video, the solo violin plays a different melody which sounds sadder because it is descending, and consists of quavers and dotted minims, which stretches their duration. As Werner Wolf writes, a descending melody can also indicate decay or weariness,<sup>78</sup> and in the visuals, the count is sitting in a chair, tiredly bended over with his head down in a dark room where he is illuminated. The violin is interpreted as emotional, as sad, underscoring the count's emotions; in the score, this is indicated by the word 'espress.' (*espressivo*, expressive). The count is alone in a dungeon of the castle, imprisoned for a long time while he is innocent and separated from his loved ones.

<sup>78</sup> Werner Wolf, "Transmedial Narratology: Theoretical Foundations and Some Applications (Fiction, Single Pictures, Instrumental Music)," *Narrative* 25, no. 3 (October 2017): 272.

*Music notation and images 1:51 – 1:56*

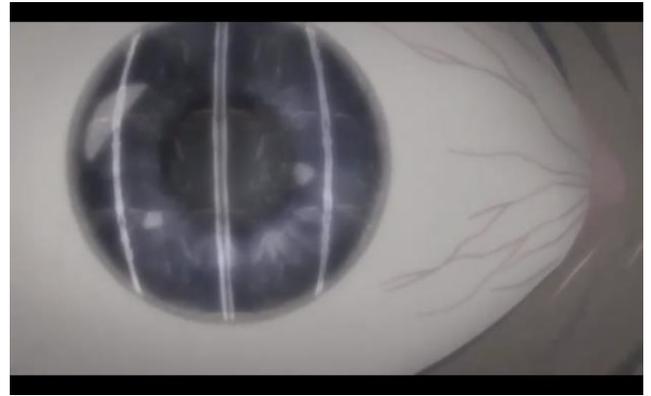


As the music grows in intensity and a crescendo is led by the strings, the count grows in despair. This is shown by widespread, trembling eyes with a reflection of prison bars which move closer as the strings play louder (crescendo) and higher. This is followed by a quick movement of the camera along a wall with counting stripes which probably refer to the counting of the days that the count has lived in prison. The descending melody played by the strings and wind instruments forms a looping at one point and repeats itself a couple of times; at the same time in the video, the camera moves from up to down along the wall. Thus, the descending line of the melody matches the downwards movement of the camera.

*Music notation: 2:06 – 2:08*



Images: 2:06 – 2:08



Music notation: 2:10 – 2:12

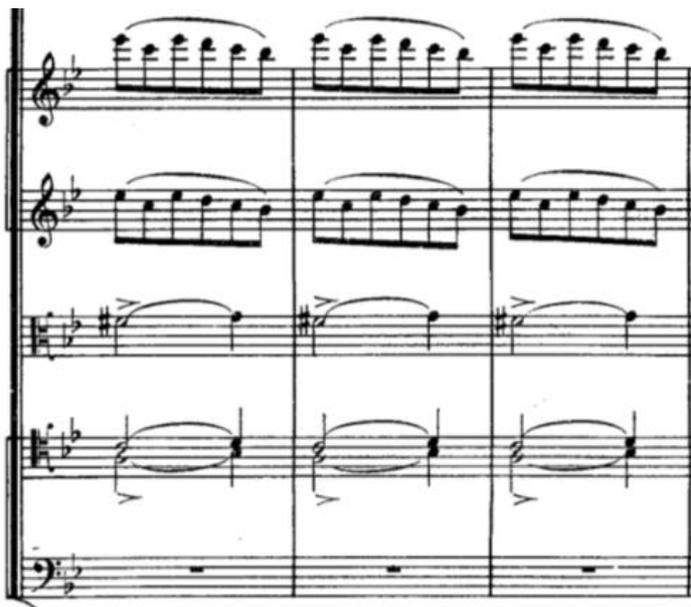
A musical score consisting of five staves. The first four staves are in treble clef, and the fifth is in bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The word "cresc." is written below the first four staves, indicating a crescendo. The notation is complex, with many notes and rests, and some notes are beamed together.

*Images: 2:09 – 2:12*



The images after this alter very quickly and in 2:15, the circling background mimics the lower strings, which loop a descending melody. The butterflies that fly over seem to mimic the upper strings, which play a faster melody. This is again an example of the use of different tracks within one clip and the looping of images and melody. This looping represents the feeling of eternity of the count; his imprisonment seems to go on and on and the counting of days does not seem to stop, which is driving the count insane. The images often show lots of psychedelic-looking things such as butterflies, doors and flowers which corresponds to the psychic state of the count's mind; the music sounds psychedelic with its loopings, which is synchronized by the visuals.

*Music notation: 2:15*



*Images: 2:15*



At 2:27, a big cadence is played once again and the fast movement of images ends with one clip of a cross surrounded by light. However, the madness does not stop there; just as in the music, the orchestra plays very intense, the images are intense too. At 2:33, the cadence of the timpani is represented by a flash of light. In 2:40, the intensity of the orchestra is quite literally shown by a clip of multiplied figures that play cellos, altered by a clip of multiplied figures playing violins. In the music, these instruments play on the foreground as well at that time.

*Images: 2:40*



From 2:44 to 2:46, accented crotchet notes by the instruments are played alternated by quaver notes. The images are synchronized to these notes very accurately with synch points of things falling down or being smashed right at the moment the accented chords on the first beats by the orchestra are played. It is as if the sound comes from these things being smashed, which is another example of synchresis. In 2:46, the big cadence that is played by all instruments, is reflected in the images by a vase that hits the ground and breaks into little pieces. It can be interpreted as everything falling apart; everything seems to go wrong in the life of the count.

*Images: 2:46*



The grande finale of the *Danse Macabre* is also the grande finale of the AMV, with a peak of five clips when the whole orchestra plays the same rhythm very loud, *fff* (fortefortissimo) and intense (see figure 2). At 3:11, the final part starts with the horns. This quiet part, with a leading oboe until 3:17, underscores images of the count outside his house looking at fireworks. In 3:18, the full orchestra comes back for the last time as we see an image of the earth with a light coming from behind. This light explodes into bubbles when the orchestra strikes its final grand cadence; the sound of music explodes and is diffused into the air, into the viewer's face just like the bubbles in the video that fly at the same speed right to them and diffuse as well. As the music dies, the light also disappears and darkness falls.

In the AMV 'Dentelle' a lot is happening in the visuals and the same goes for the music, which is an orchestral piece. The AMV does not have a clear linear story like 'You Make Me Smile' but consists of flashbacks and images that show different things most of the time. However, the images follow the music and its diverse parts quite accurately with many synch points that correspond to different musical parameters and changing of mood. They

often correspond to the duration of the notes or the rhythm of the instruments. The many cadences in the music are frequently illustrated in the visuals by explosions of lights. Accented chords are also mimicked which is very clear in the end part, when synch points are formed by smashed things in the images. These images correspond to the loudness and intensity of the music. The texture and sound of instruments is also mimicked by the images when the triangle plays, which underscores a clip of coins falling down; the sound and the image match very well and seem to belong together, which is the effect of synchresis. The musical parameter of sound and texture is also reflected in images of the falling guillotine knife, which corresponds to the scraping sound of the violin playing tritones. This ‘devil’s interval’ is also associated with evilness and the demon from the story in the AMV. Another musical parameter that is mimicked by the visuals and which was not very present in ‘You Make Me Smile’, is the use of different tracks. This musical parameter reappears several times with different images. One of these is the clip of the count in the carriage while the window shows the speed of the environment passing by, the same speed as the strings. But also a shot of a door which comes to the viewer and opens on the first beat, while the faster circling figures around the door mimic the speed of the melody. Also, a clip of a circling background, which matches a looping melody, while the flying butterflies have a different speed, reflects the mimicking of different tracks at once. Looping is another parameter that returns several times in the video while the images loop as well. This looping for example appears in a clip of a wall with counting marks; the falling camera movement corresponds to the descending melody played by the strings, which also loops. This repetition marks the feeling of eternity and as for the story, the eternal imprisonment of the count. In this fragment, there are two parameters at the same time mimicked as well; melody and repetition.

The video further shows images of instruments, such as drums, cellos and violins. This showing of instruments is quite obvious for traditional music videos; however, in animation videos, this is less usual. Thus, because the *Danse Macabre* does not include lyrics that one can refer to, they have to look for other ways to connect images to the music. As I have shown, there are a lot of possibilities for this as there are a lot of musical parameters. It is up to the AMV creator to show his or her abilities and creativity to show something different and deeper to the public, something that words cannot manifest.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined which musical parameters images are synchronized to in two AMVs with instrumental music as soundtrack. Most AMVs try to synchronize the visuals to the lyrics by lip syncing or expressing the literal meaning of the words and use words as a guide for picking anime footage for their video. Another musical parameter which images are often synchronized to is the beat or rhythm. However, by analysing the connections between instrumental music and images in the AMVs ‘Dentelle’ and ‘You Make Me Smile’, I have shown that lyrics and beats are not the only parameters the visuals could be edited to. Mood is also a common musical element used for synch, which is also applied in ‘Dentelle’ and ‘You Make Me Smile’. This mood often serves the changes in the amount of clips per second. Apart from mood, other musical parameters such as sound and its texture and timbre, melody, looping and tempo alone can also serve as a guide for AMVs. What is interesting though, is that ‘You Make Me Smile’ and ‘Dentelle’ are not set to pure instrumental or absolute music. ‘You Make Me Smile’ is edited to a song with samples in it from a girl speaking words and ‘Dentelle’ is edited to a program music piece, the *Danse Macabre* by Saint-Saëns. Moreover, this orchestral piece is quite famous and already has many associations due to its title and theme and its accompaniment to other images about death. So, when creating their videos, the makers also had some lyrical guidelines they could work with. It thus seems that AMV makers search for instrumental music with some literal references to it when they want to make an instrumental music AMV. However, the biggest part of the ‘semi-instrumental’ compositions does not consist of lyrics or extra-musical references, which is why I aimed to investigate this more.

I have analysed two AMVs and used several methods for this. The first one was counting how many shots or clips are edited per second and putting the results in a graph. This gives a clear overview of the AMVs and shows changes in the course of the video. As clips are often tightly synchronized to the music, the graphs also show the changes in music. Through timestamps in the analyses and showing what is happening in the visuals and music, I referred back to the graph, so one can see what happens in the video at what particular moment. These graphs have really helped me to keep track of the AMVs and to follow the analyses, so I would recommend using this method for analysing AMVs in future research.

As I mentioned before, I have analysed two AMVs into more detail and this has its benefits and losses. The benefits are the ability to dive more into the AMVs and their soundtrack and give more precise and detailed analyses, which is something that is rarely done in research on AMVs. However, a loss is that I only could examine two AMVs as detailed as possible. This of course is a constraint in making general conclusions, as there are lots of more AMVs with instrumental music as soundtrack that could have a different approach to interpreting and synchronizing instrumental music to images. I have also used hermeneutics as a method to interpret some of the audio-visual connections or suggest a deeper meaning when this was not immediately clear. However, this technique can be subjective and thus not always reliable for making solid conclusions. Nevertheless, it can also gain more insight and share other perspectives on the case studies.

For future research, it might be interesting to examine how absolute or classical musical without a title and any reference is interpreted by AMVs, if there are any AMVs that use this kind of instrumental music at all. But also other AMVs in the category 'best use of instrumental music' are worth analysing and examining, as every AMV is different and any maker could synchronize images to different musical parameters.

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