

VIDEO GAME MUSIC ANALYSIS  
- **For Educational Use Only** -

**Troops March On**  
*from Final Fantasy VI*

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[www.seventhsam.com](http://www.seventhsam.com)

**Intro** ♩ = 70

Timpani

Violins

Violas

Electric Bass

bII (Db) implies the Phrygian mode

①

*C Phrygian*

This track is *truly* modal when it comes to the harmony. Chords are created, but they are *incidental* - a result of the interplay between the melody and the persistent, droning tonic (C, Eb, and F in their respective sections). For analytical purposes, I'll be foregoing the roman numeral analysis (as that doesn't quite apply to this type of harmony) and instead be labeling the tonal centers/modes that are implied, along with the various scalar motions and intervals that accomplish that implication.

The result is a kind of harmony that's quite *static* (in that there is much less tension/release than one would get with "functional" harmony), but in this track that's a good thing. The purpose of the music is to create a relentlessly antagonistic ambience, a constant feeling of impending conflict. "Modal" harmony of this kind is fantastic for such use.

(1) - The somewhat low-pitched parallel 4ths between the Violins and Violas make for a ominous, open sound that - combined with the chromatic movement - evokes an unmistakeably serious and intimidating tone. This paints the picture of a marching enemy army quite well!

5 A

Tpts. 3 ②

Timp.

Sn. D. ①

Vlins.

Vlas.

El. B. 8

Persistent droning between tonic and bII roots the music firmly in C Phrygian.

- (1) - The harmony isn't the only thing that's static. The rhythm adheres to straightforward march pattern, nothing fancy here. This suggests order, discipline, conformity - all very militaristic and in fulfillment of the tracks' purpose and namesake.
- (2) - And - in case the military vibe wasn't clear enough - we have stentorian brass (and dramatic strings in the B section) covering the melody, complete with idiomatic 16th note triplets. The only thing *not* immediately suggestive of a military march is the electric bass, but since that never prominently features it also never sticks out.

9

①

F Hns.

Tpts.

Timp.

Sn. D.

Vlns.

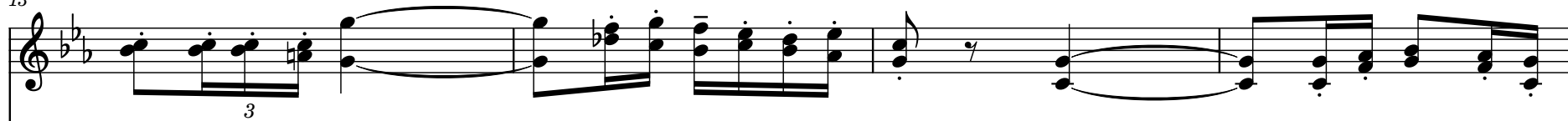
Vlas.

El. B.

(1) - The French Horns' thirds in mm. 10 trace a Bb Minor chord (which would be the 7th scale degree of C Phrygian. However, it's an implication at best due to the persistent tonic pedal in the bass.

13

Tpts.



Timp.



Sn. D.



Vlns.



Vlas.



El. B.



17

F Hns.

Tpts.

Timp.

Sn. D.

Vlns.

Vlas.

El. B.

The notes in red (see above) are no different than the previous measures, but here they rather cleverly serve as a "walk up" to the next section's tonal center of Eb. In this context, Db can be seen (and heard) as the subtonic seventh degree of Eb minor and thus serves as a sort of "pivot tone".

21 **B** Fifths in horns create powerful, stentorian sound as well as reinforce tonal center (with first and fifth scale degrees)

First three notes of Eb Minor repeated throughout, roots our ears in the key.

Chromatic passing tones

Again, first three notes of Eb Minor

leading tone to Eb minor

F Hns.

Timp.

Sn. D.

Vlns.

Vlas.

El. B.

*Eb Minor/Aeolian*

Wait a minute! How did we get to Eb Minor from C Phrygian? Where was the modulation?

Recall that this track is modal in nature. Since the harmony is static to begin with, a quick step into a different key for some more static harmony around a *different* tonal center doesn't have the same jarring effect as it does when functional harmony is the centerpiece. Unless your ears are meticulously trained to reject anything that's not common practice, this "abrupt" modulation fits right in with the style of the track.

25

F Hns.

Timp.

Sn. D.

Vlns.

Vlas.

El. B.

**Bb now rings out as the fourth degree of Lydian mode.**

**D natural acts as leading tone to Eb, taking us right back to...Eb!**

**Fb Lydian**

*F flat Lydian? What the f-**Allow me to explain:***

- The track is shifting up a half step to the bII degree of Eb Minor and using that as a tonal center. Since Intergalactic Enharmonic Law™ dictates that no two scale steps can use the same letter, that bII is therefore F, but...flat!
- Lydian is the fourth mode from the major/Ionian mode that forms the reference point for the seven diatonic modes. That would make Fb the fourth mode of...Cb major? *How on earth did we get Cb major?*
  - Well, recall that we arrived at Eb Minor by walking up to it via a pivot tone - Db (i.e. C -> Db -> Eb) and then just shifting the mode/key to Eb minor. Already a somewhat unorthodox "modulation", but here we are. *So why not D# minor? If we did that, we'd have E Lydian (which is much easier to visualize) as the fourth mode of B major, right?*
    - Well, the reason we can't do that is because then the implied scalar motion to get to Eb minor would have to be C -> Db -> D#. If you recall, Intergalactic Enharmonic Law™ dictates that no two scale steps can be the same letter. So that's a no-no. So Eb Minor it is, thus necessitating Fb Lydian and therefore Cb Major so we don't violate Intergalactic Enharmonic Law™. *So why Fb Lydian again?*
      - Because it's the scale/mode we can base the bII scale degree of Eb off of. This could be seen as a modal approach to implying a Neapolitan sixth chord, but unlike the Neapolitan sixth, it's not being used as a modally interchanged pre-dominant. Instead, it's part of a modal vamp (oscillation) between two tonal centers: Eb and E...sorry, I mean Fb.

*If none of what I just wrote makes any sense or it seems like unnecessary overthinking, I'm fairly certain Uematsu - a self taught, rock-inspired musician - would agree. Whether you think of these particular measures as Fb Lydian or E Lydian, as tonal or modal, as Neapolitan or bII, what matters is the sound and how you achieve it. Theory is meant to be a tool, not a prison. However Uematsu conceptualized this, it works; may it be so in all your music as well!*



The musical score for measures 29-32 is written for six instruments: F Horns (F Hns.), Timp., Sn. D., Vlns., Vlas., and El. B. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score consists of four measures, each ending with a repeat sign. The F Horns part features a series of chords and single notes. The Timp. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Sn. D. part has a steady eighth-note pulse. The Vlns. part has a melodic line with slurs. The Vlas. part has a melodic line with slurs. The El. B. part has a steady eighth-note pulse.

The vamp between tonic and bII (and the drama inherent in said vamp) intensifies as the track approaches the loop point.

***How does this compare to the other two?***

This track is heard before the others, and thus the theme is established here. It can be thought of as the "original" material that the other two draw upon. Since the A theme is the only melodic line shared between the three tracks, that's the one I'll be focusing on. Take a look at the last page on the other two scores to see what the other two tracks do differently compared to this one and thus how Uematsu uses the \*same\* theme in \*different\* ways to simultaneously achieve thematic coherency and musical contrast.