

Mode Mixture in John Mayer's *Continuum*

G. Fankhauser

Name: _____

Part Writing

- John Mayer, "Stop This Train" (*Continuum*, 2006), 1:15–2:00 <https://youtu.be/2UiX4dUUjWc?t=75>
 - Write parts for SATB, starting in 4/4 meter in *close position* (G, B, D, F $\sharp$). In m. 1, the sevenths need not resolve down. In m. 2, the cadential six-four resolves to a dominant as expected, but then two passing tones continue a chromatic descent: the figured bass " $\flat 3-2$ " represent scale degrees $\flat \hat{7}-\hat{6}$. Watch for parallel fifths at the cadence, with B to A in the melody. There is a way to revoice m. 2 to avoid them, but parallel fifths may be OK in this genre. If you keep them, label them.
 - The word "stop" is accompanied by $ii^{\flat 6}_5$, "borrowed" from the parallel minor, with an unusually dissonant 7–6 suspension. Identify the rare "seventh-chord" quality on the downbeat (G-B $\flat$ -D-F $\sharp$): _____
 - What is the topic of the song? What is the "train" that Mayer wants stopped? The major key might imply a positive mood, but dissonance in the verse and the chorus express a heavier narrative. Explain.
 - Sing each of your parts along with a recording. Each quarter note represents a measure.

Verse 2					Chorus				

D: IV⁷ I⁷ IV⁷ I⁷ (7–6) ii^{♭6}₅ I⁶ V⁷/V V⁸⁻⁷_{4-3-♭3-2} I

Lyrics: Don't know how else to say it.
I don't want to see my parents go.
One generation's length away
From fighting life out on my own.

Stop this train. I want to get off and go
Home again. I can't take the speed it's
Moving in. I know I can't, but,
Honestly, won't someone stop this ... train?



Analysis

- John Mayer, "Gravity" (*Continuum*, 2006)
At the end of the introductory guitar solo in his studio version, Mayer plays a leap from E up to A (see the somewhat simplified version in "a"). In some more recent live versions, however, he plays an E $\flat$ up to A (see "b"). What scale degree is altered, and how is it altered? _____
Why might have Mayer chosen to make that alteration? (See the lyrics below.)

To fit with the E $\flat$, the band changes its harmony from C^{add6} (C-E-G-A, often written simply "C6"). While they could choose A^{♭7}/C (C-E $\flat$ -G-A, often written Cm6), they play F7 (F-A-C-E $\flat$). Provide harmonic analysis of these two options:

In G, A^{♭7}/C (or Cm6) = _____.

In G, F7 = _____ (HINT: Not "V⁷/♭III")

Lyrics: Gravity is working against me,
and gravity wants to bring me down.

- Studio version (0:29–0:34)

<https://youtu.be/7VBex8zbDRs?t=22>

Slow blues

G C C6

- Some live versions

Slow blues

G C F7

G: I IV

Live in LA with Alessia Cara (2017), c. 1:02

<https://youtu.be/UY7FpJbODvE?t=57>

Live in Singapore (2019), c. 2:16:15

<https://youtu.be/0cQftXU5D9s?t=8170>