Lobbying for a La-Based Approach to the Minor Tonic in Popular Music

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February 29, 2020
Vanderbilt University

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Sing Tonic!

“Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

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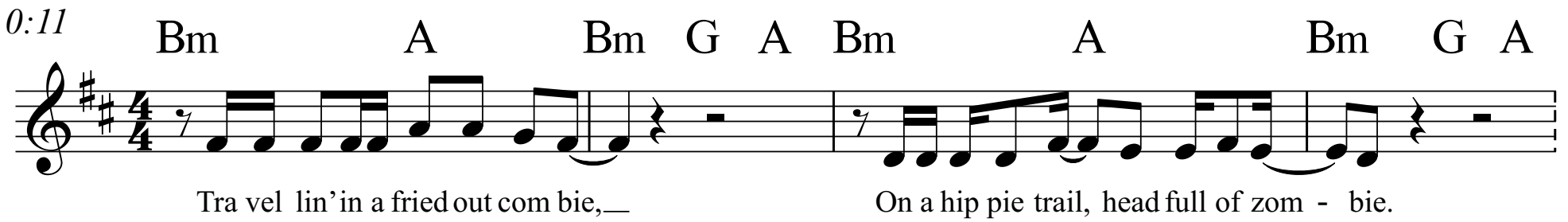
“Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse



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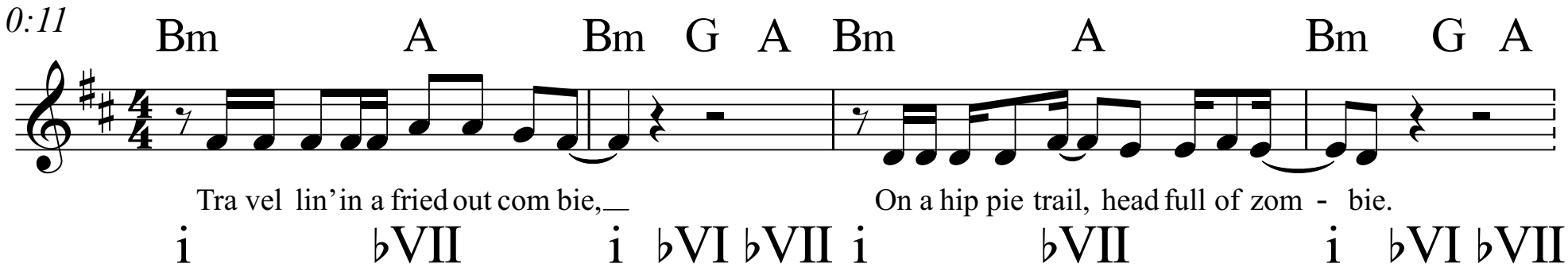
“Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse



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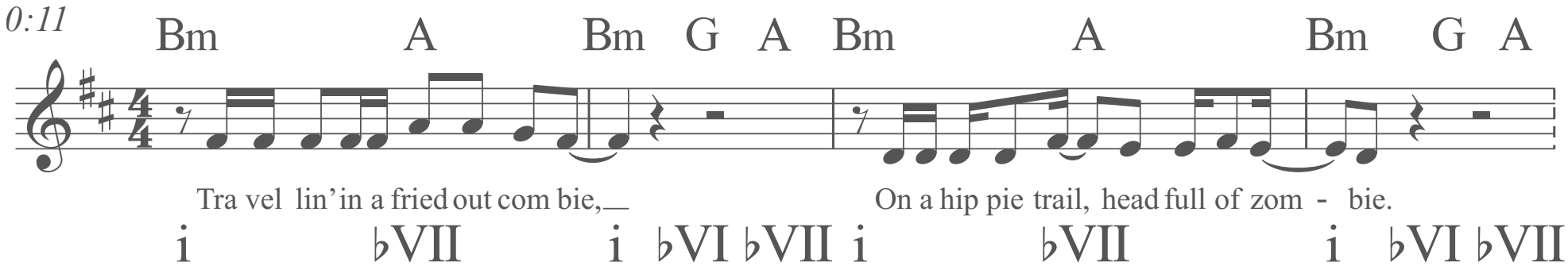

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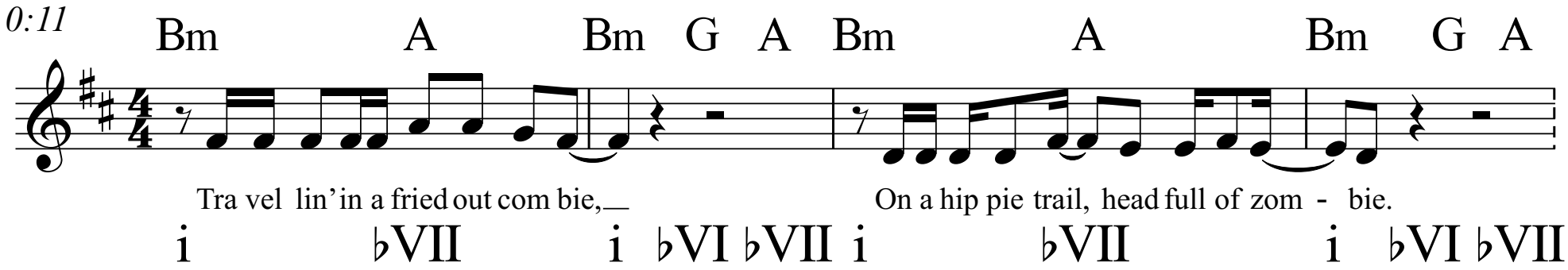
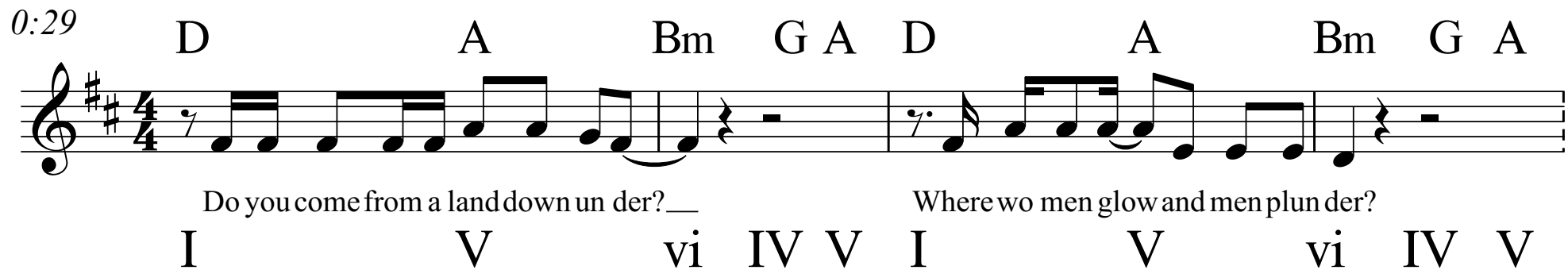
“Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus

“Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse



“Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus



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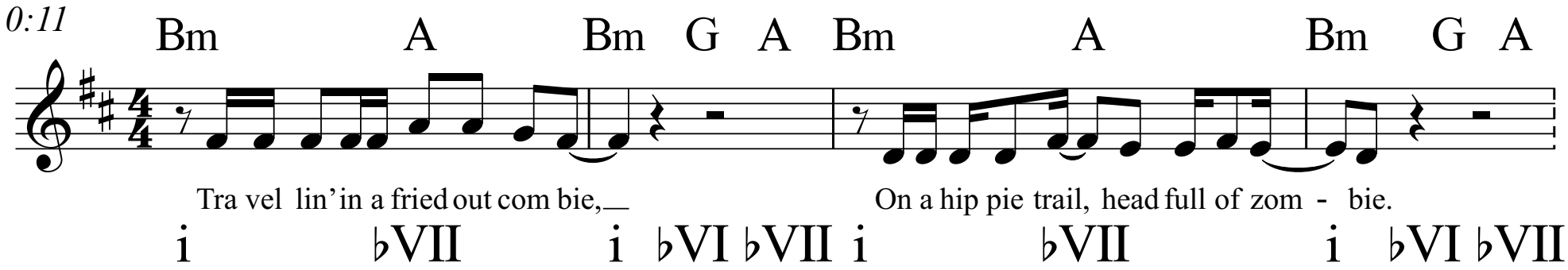

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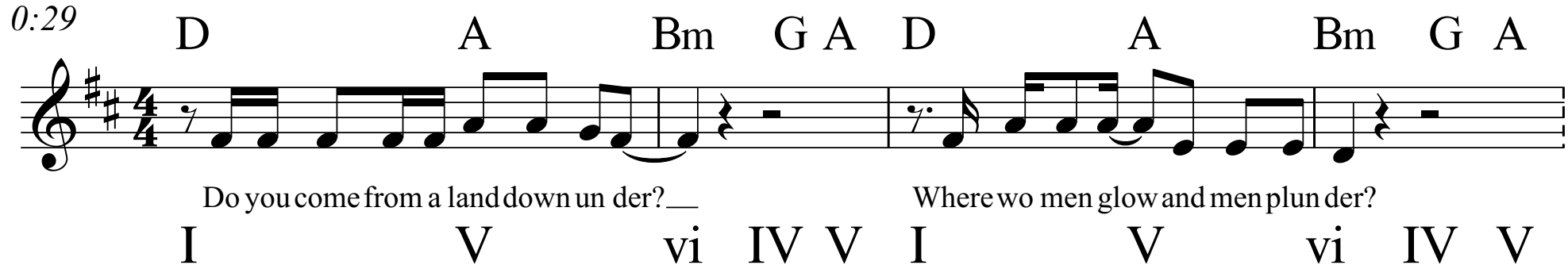
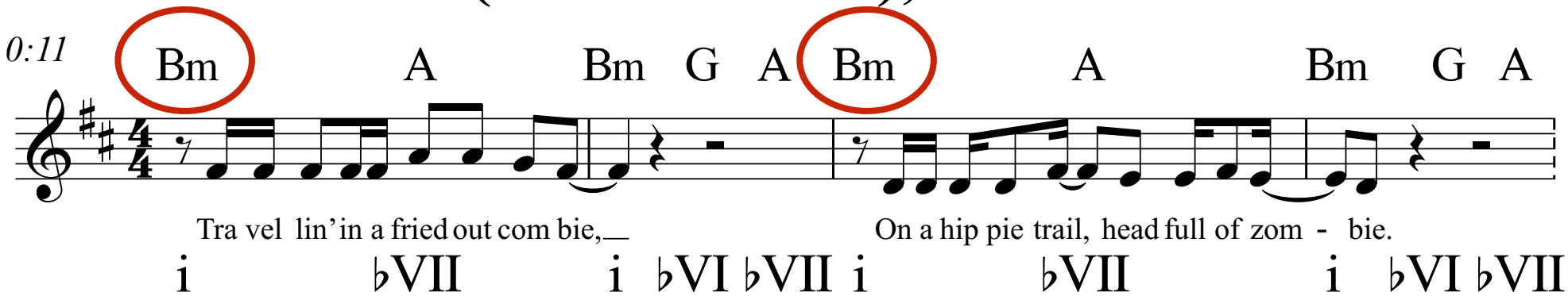
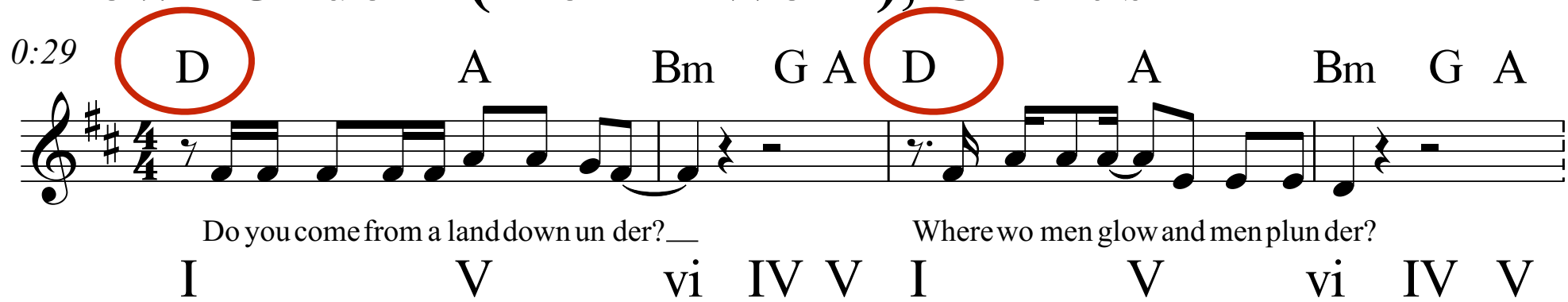


Analysis from Doll (2011)

“Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse



“Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus



Analysis from Doll (2011)

A “La-Based” Approach

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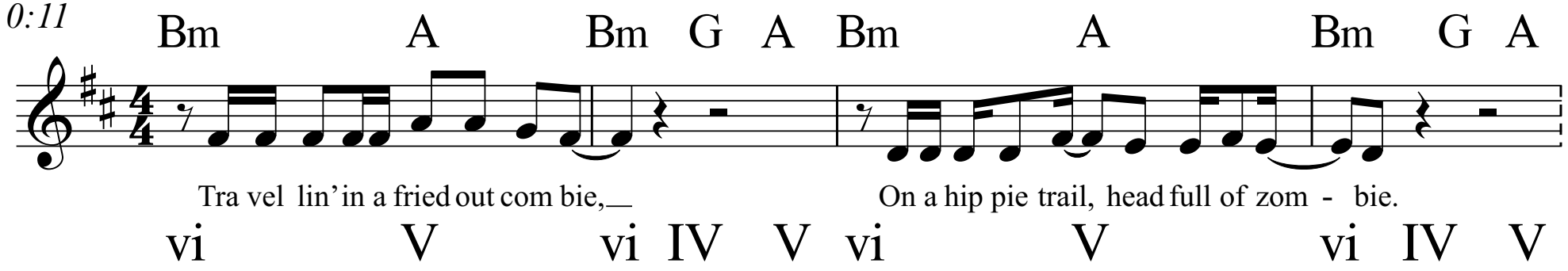

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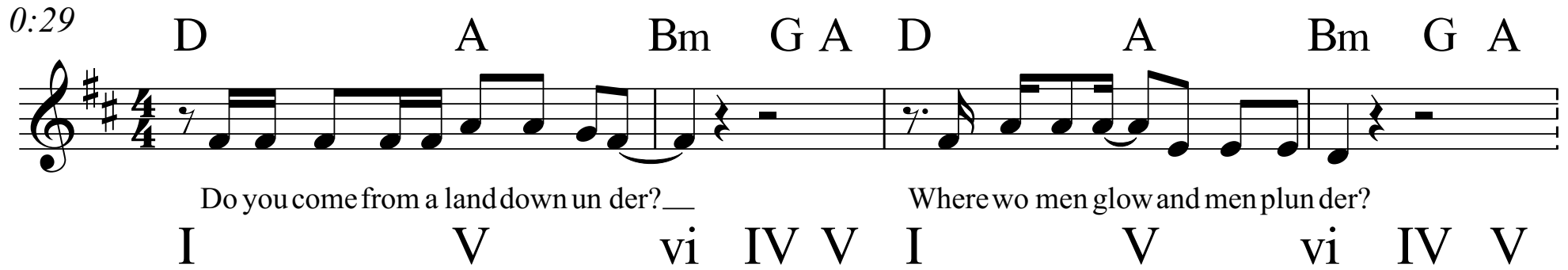


“Hotel California” (Eagles)

Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
G	D	Em	F#

Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
G	D	Em	F#

“Hotel California” (Eagles)

Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
i	V	♭VII	IV
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
♭VI	♭III	V	i
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

Temperley (2013)

“Hotel California” (Eagles)

Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
i	V	♭VII	IV
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
D: IV	D: I	V	i
G	D	Em	F#
D: IV	D: I	iv	V

de Clercq (2013)

“Hotel California” (Eagles)

Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
i	V	♭VII	IV
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
D: IV	D: I	V	i
G	D	Em	F#
D: IV	D: I	iv	V

de Clercq (2013)

“Hotel California” (Eagles)

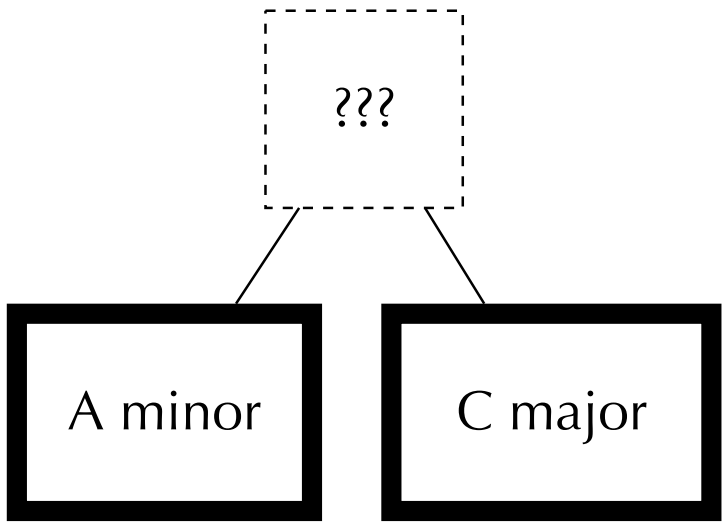
Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
vi	III	V	II
G	D	Em	F#
IV	I	ii	III

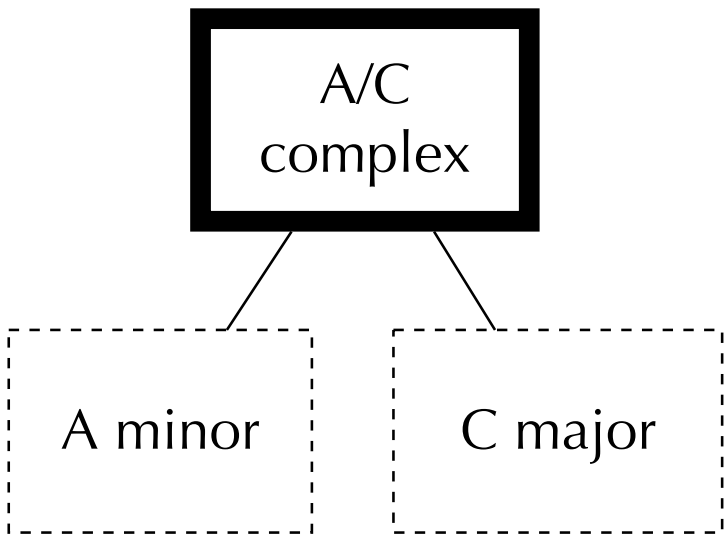
Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
IV	I	III	vi
G	D	Em	F#
IV	I	ii	III

Tonal Ambiguity

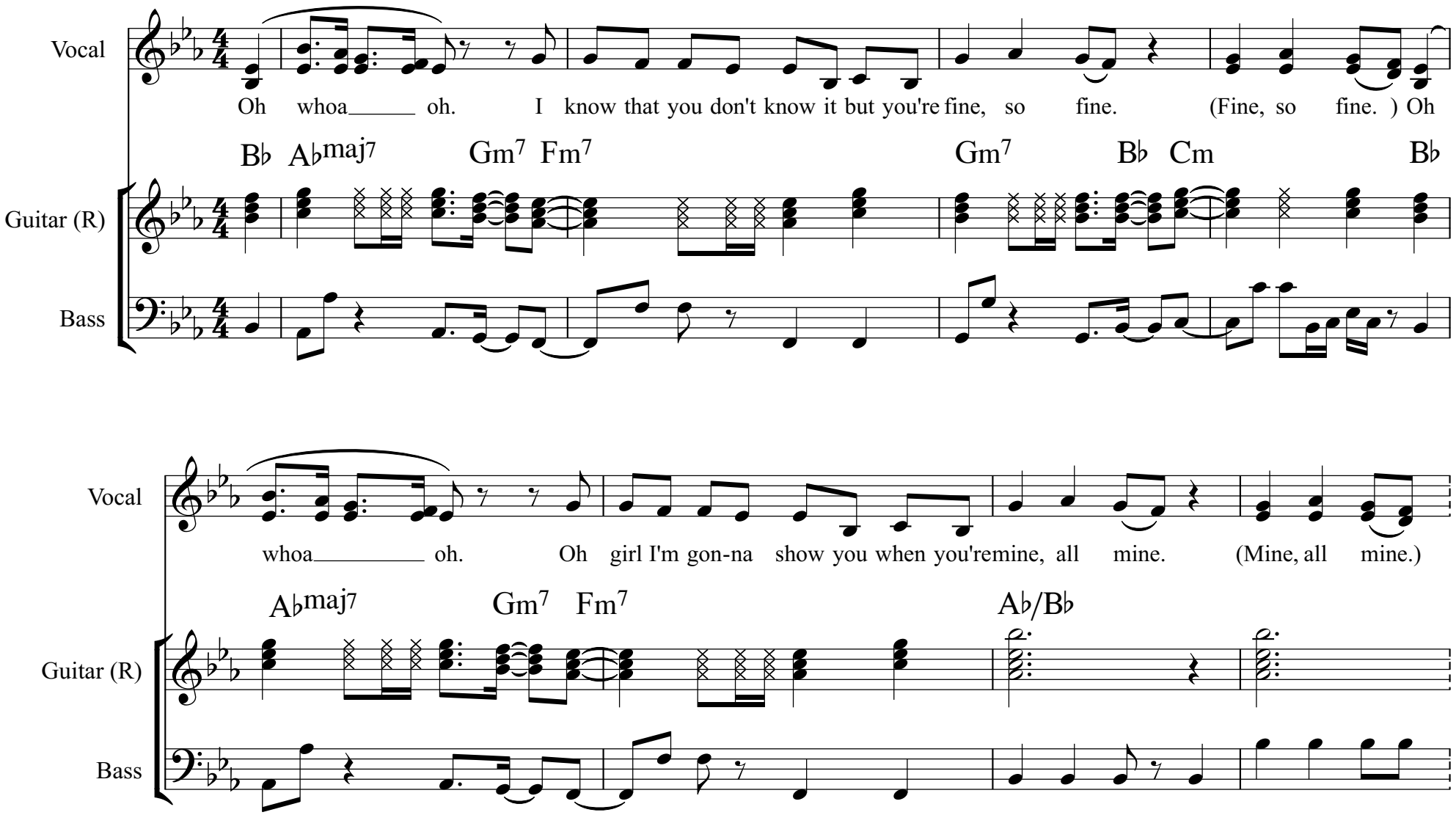


Double-Tonic Complex



Nobile (2020)

“Treasure” (Bruno Mars)



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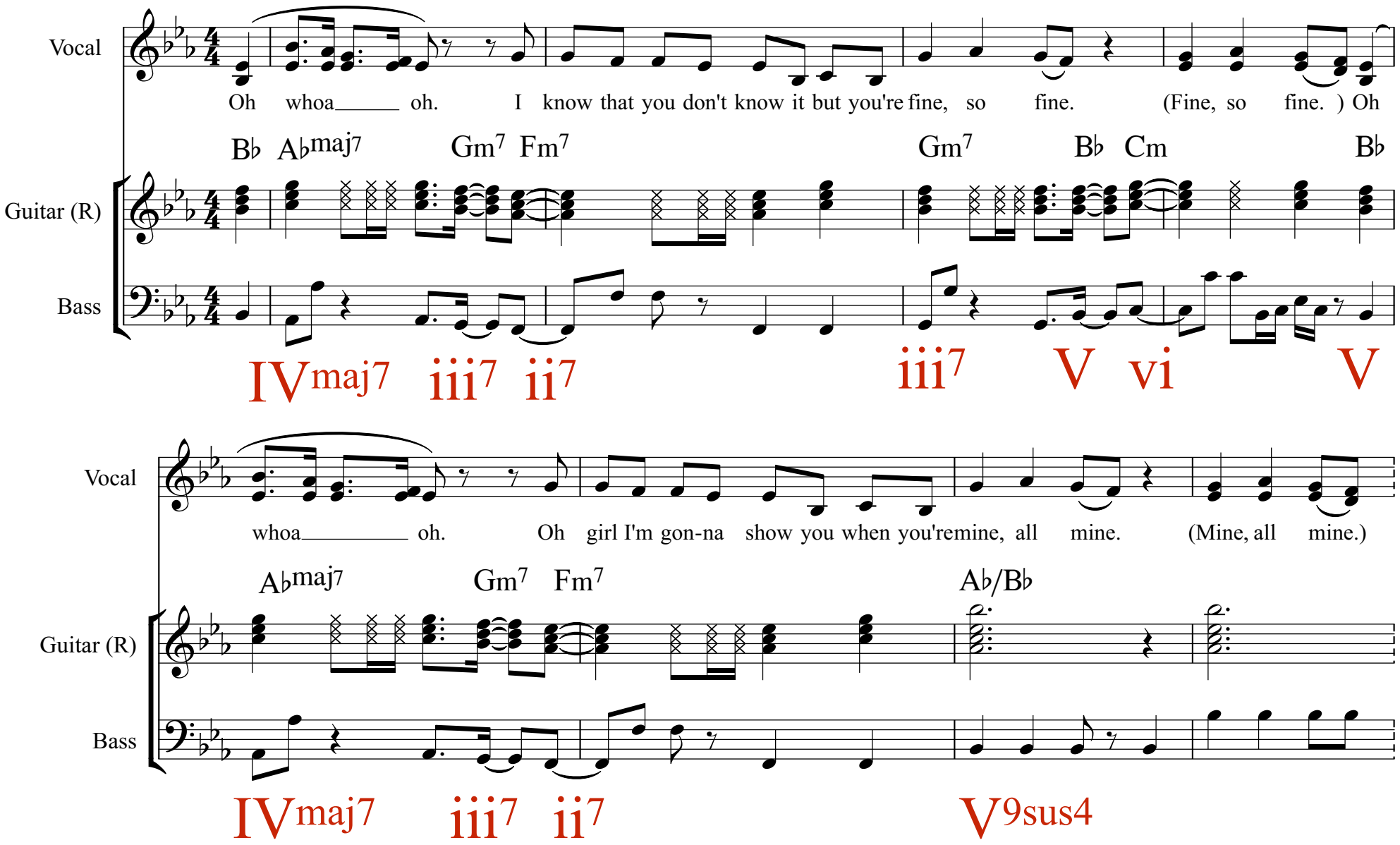
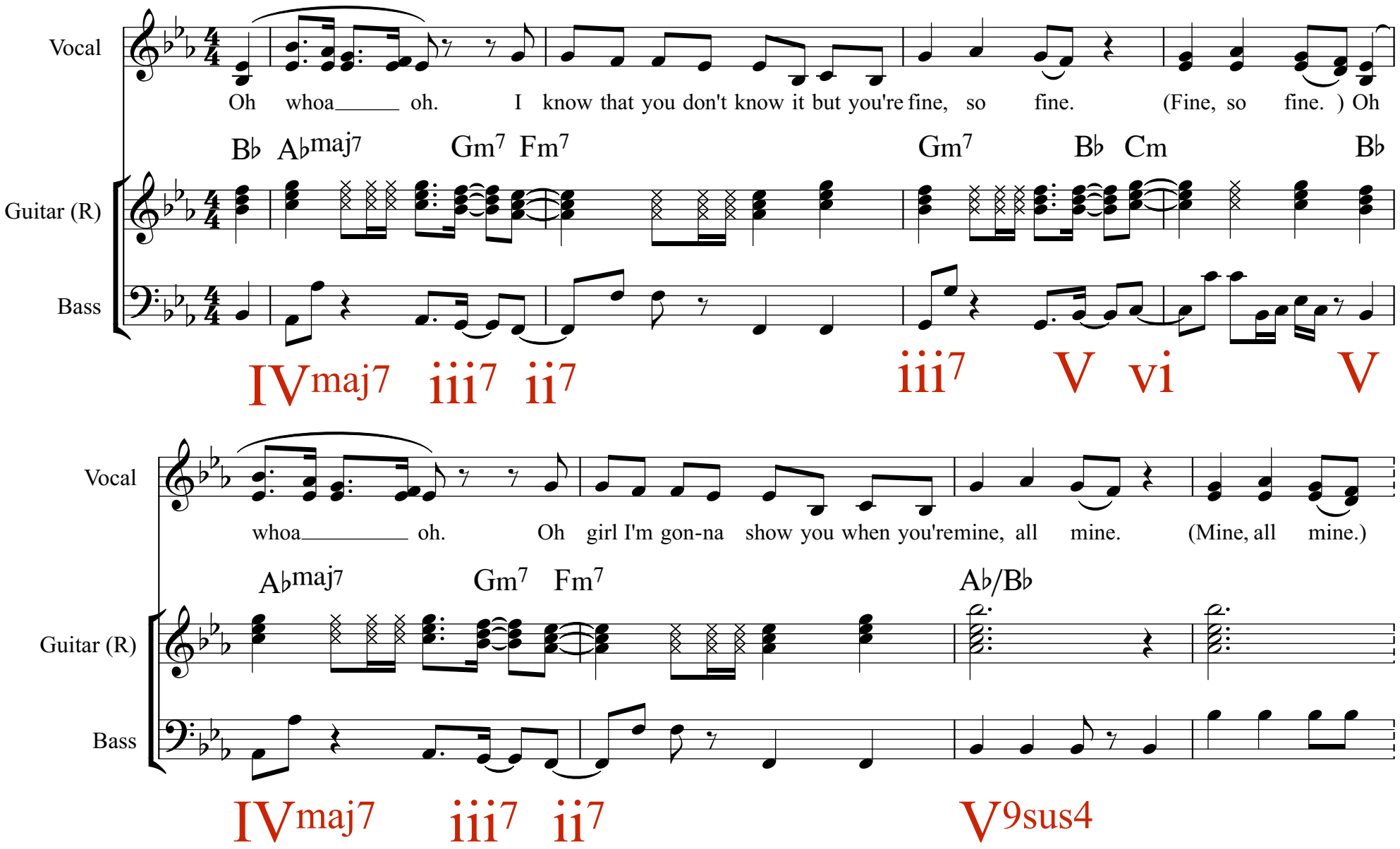


“Absent” Tonic?

“Treasure” (Bruno Mars)



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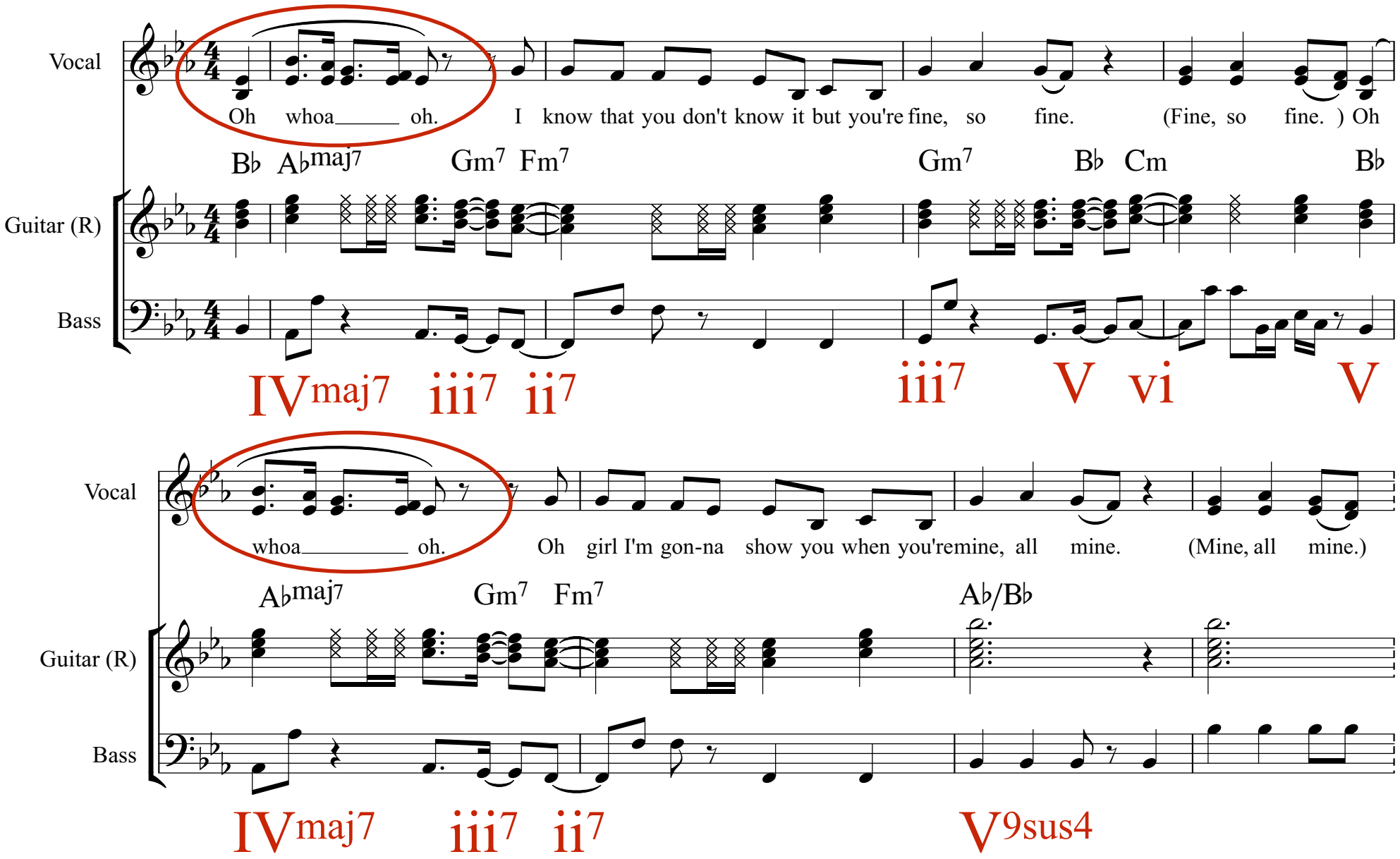
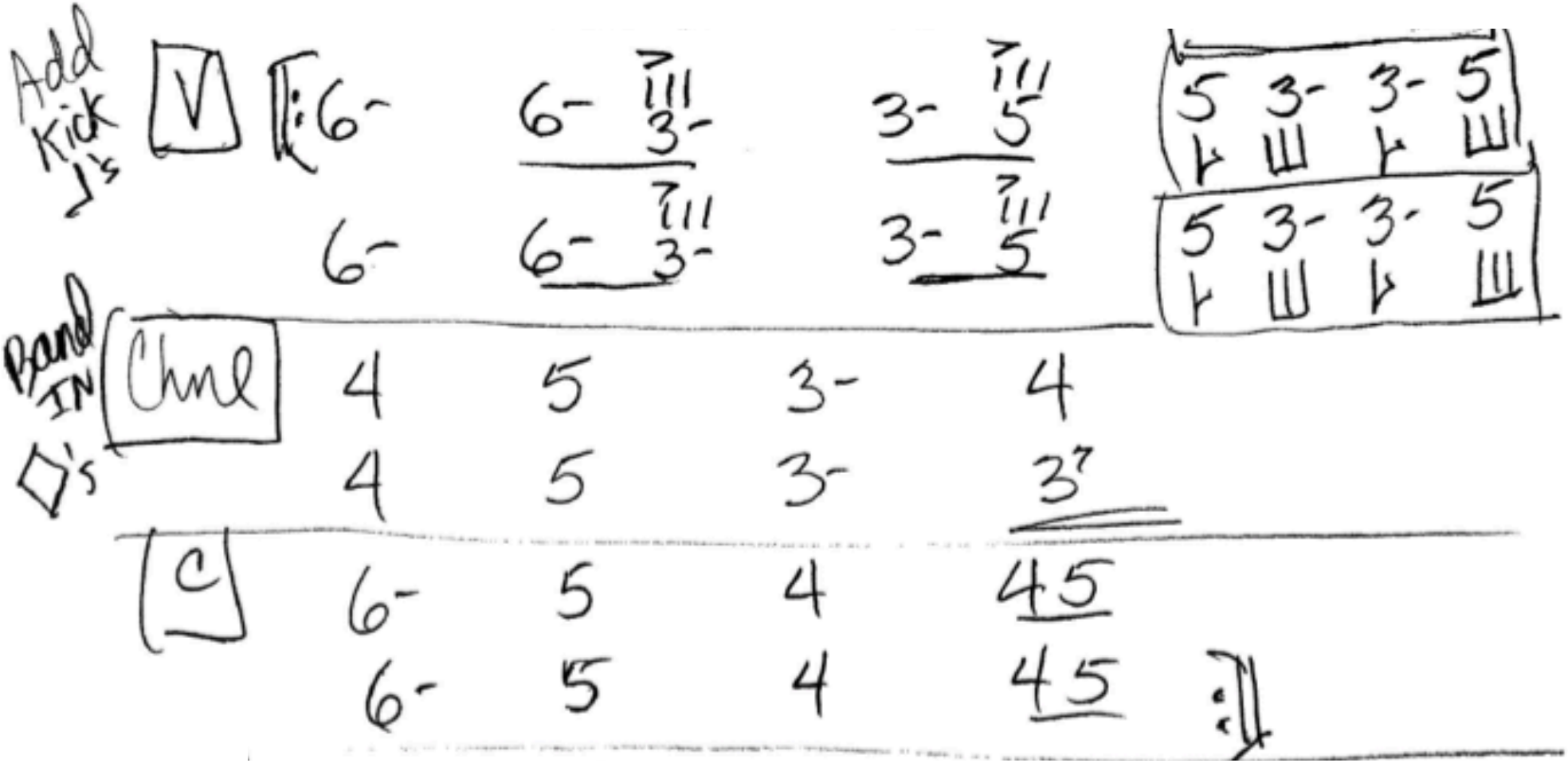


Nashville Chart

“Rolling in the Deep” (Adele)



Williams (2017)

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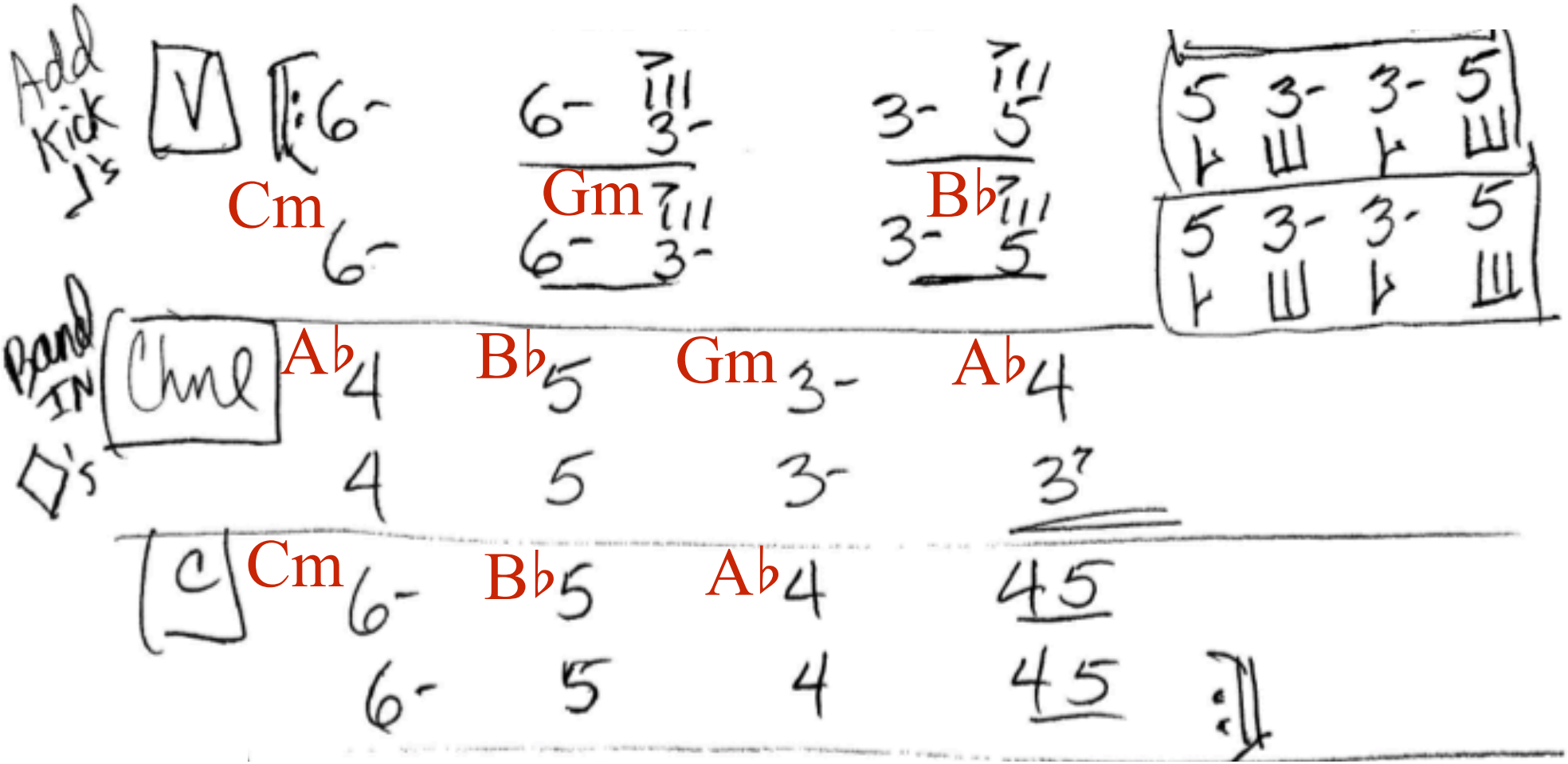

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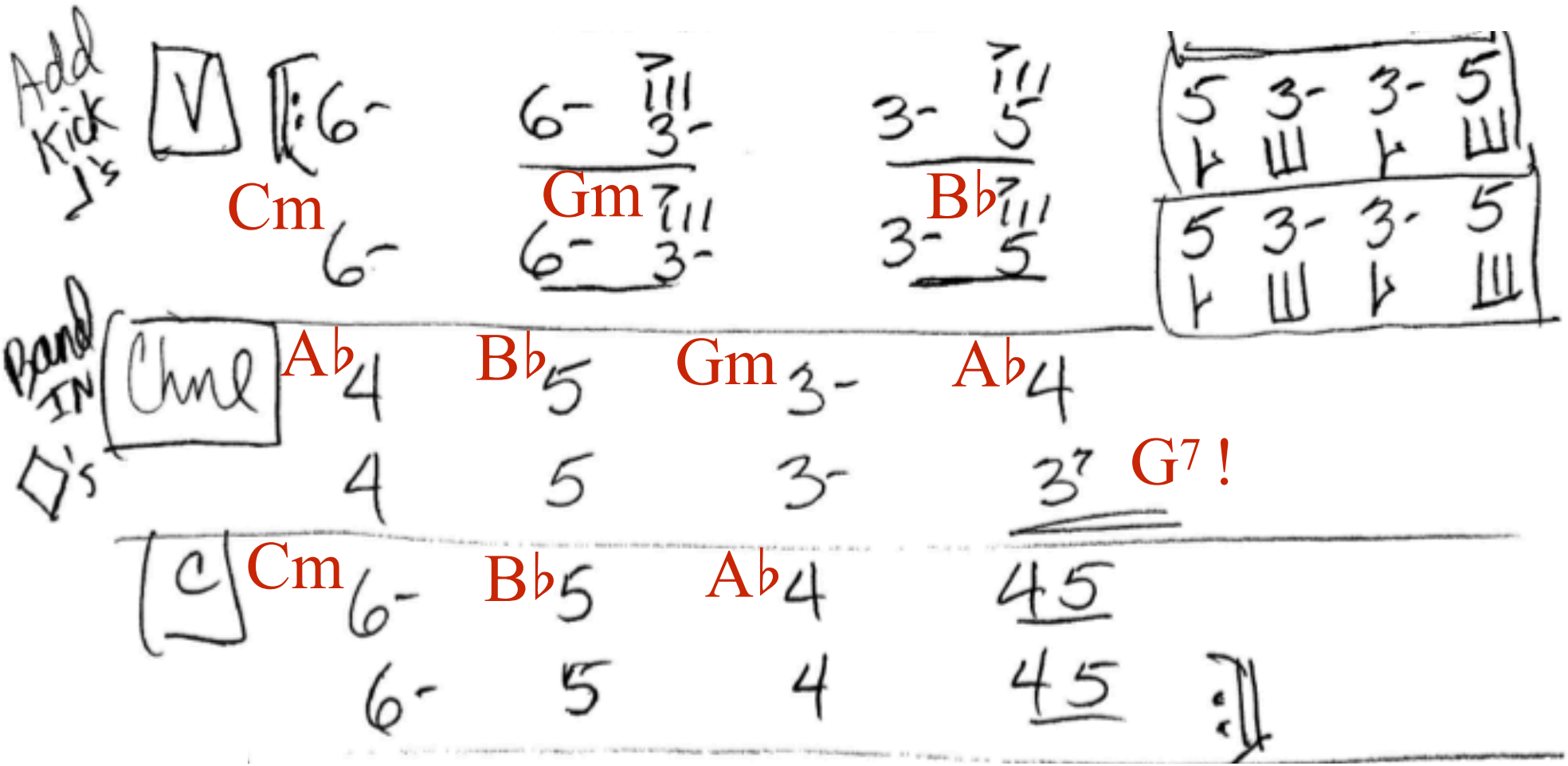

Williams (2017)

Some Stats

All, Do Minor (n = 200)		
Root	**Instances**	**% total**
I	6,077	33.2
IV	4,143	22.7
V	3,121	17.1
♭VII	1,347	7.4
VI	1,116	6.1
II	864	4.7
♭VI	662	3.6
♭III	410	2.2
III	398	2.2
♭II	56	0.3
VII	52	0.3
♯IV	43	0.2

(from the RS 200)

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Major Tonic (n = 154)		
Root	**Instances**	**% total**
I	4,507	34.0
IV	3,442	26.0
V	2,502	18.9
VI	1,007	7.6
♭VII	596	4.5
II	587	4.4
III	359	2.7
♭III	82	0.6
♭VI	66	0.5
VII	43	0.3
♯IV	31	0.2
♭II	22	0.2

(from the RS 200)

Some Stats

Do Minor Tonic (n = 32)		
Root	**Instances**	**% total**
I	1,128	33.1
♭VII	535	15.7
V	450	13.2
♭VI	448	13.2
IV	441	13.0
♭III	274	8.0
II	83	2.4
♭II	24	0.7
♯IV	12	0.4
VI	8	0.2
III	2	0.1
VII	0	0.0

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Chi-Squared ≈ 28,000

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VII	43	0.3
♯IV	31	0.2
♭II	22	0.2

Chi-Squared ≈ 2,800

Patterns of Harmony

Major Key

I ii iii IV V vi vii^{o}

Patterns of Harmony

Major Key

I ii iii IV V vi ~~vii°~~

All, La Minor (n = 200)		
Root	**Instances**	**% total**
I	4,781	28.7
IV	3,890	23.4
V	3,037	18.2
VI	2,135	12.8
II	1,028	6.2
III	809	4.9
♭VII	620	3.7
VII	126	0.8
♭III	94	0.6
♭VI	66	0.4
♯IV	39	0.2
♭II	24	0.1

Patterns of Harmony

Major Key

I ii iii IV V vi ♭VII

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♯IV	39	0.2
♭II	24	0.1

Patterns of Harmony

Major Key

I ii iii IV V vi ♭VII

Minor Key

i ii° ♭III iv v or V ♭VI ♭VII

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Root	**Instances**	**% total**
I	4,781	28.7
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Patterns of Harmony

Major Key

I ii iii IV V vi ♭VII

Minor Key

vi ♭VII I ii iii or III IV V

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“Axis” Progression (and rotations)

C	G	Am	F
G	Am	F	C
Am	F	C	G
F	C	G	Am

“Axis” Progression (and rotations)

C	G	Am	F
I	V	vi	IV
G	Am	F	C
Am	F	C	G
i	♭VI	♭III	♭VII
F	C	G	Am

“Umbrella” (Rihanna)

Chorus

G♭	D♭	A♭	B♭m
G♭	D♭	A♭	B♭m

Post-Chorus

G♭	A♭	F	B♭m
G♭	A♭	F	B♭m

Bridge

C♭	G♭	D♭	D♭
C♭	G♭	F	F

“Umbrella” (Rihanna)

Chorus

G♭	D♭	A♭	B♭m
IV	I	V	vi
G♭	D♭	A♭	B♭m
IV	I	V	vi

Post-Chorus

G♭	A♭	F	B♭m
IV	V	III	vi
G♭	A♭	F	B♭m
IV	V	III	vi

Bridge

C♭	G♭	D♭	D♭
♭VII	IV	I	I
C♭	G♭	F	F
♭VII	IV	III	III

THANK YOU!

Works Cited:

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