

Project Work 2020 Category 5 Group 5-04

WRITTEN REPORT

Beloved, Be Loved

By Chen Wei 20304, Je Junren 2A114, Daniel Adam 20305, Liu Yifei 20321



Content

1. Introduction
2. Objectives
3. Ideation Process
4. Artists' Inspirations
5. Final Product
6. Reflections

Introduction

For starters, our Project Work for 2020 was on Category 5, Creative Arts. We chose this category because creativity has become one of the most fundamental skills necessary in the 21st century. It has become the basic requirement one should have in many cases. Creativity is to be seen in an employee. Creativity is needed in starting one's own business and being an independent company. Even in the most common projects students have in school, creativity is a vital criteria for a team to stand out. Therefore, we chose to work on creative arts for this year's project work so as to start drilling ourselves and give us a kick start into the world of innovation and creativity.

From our point of view, as the saying goes "the early bird catches the worm", we realised that there is no harm in getting involved in the field of creative arts earlier than others, moreover when it would bring us countless amounts of benefits in our future. In our opinion, starting at the age of 14 is an ideal time where we start firing up our critical thinking skills and start thinking creatively.

Objectives



Love is something everyone experiences. It can be a feeling, or a means to bring joy and warmth, or a private date between two people, or even a cup of hot chocolate. It is a topic often discussed amongst everyone. But has everyone ever appreciated the importance of it. We composed a few songs hoping to spread love to everyone. Love among family members, friends, and acquaintances are all present in everyone of us. That is why we also want to highlight the significance of love shown in every bit of our lives.

We hope that our songs would be the ones which people listen to regardless of whether they are feeling loved or disliked. It is said that music is a miracle that soothes our miseries. Music brings us into a fantasy of our own so that we can let out our innermost feelings. In which way, we wish that our songs are able to not only bring out the meaning of love in many cases, but also work their miracles in others' lives. Any catchy tune or effect in our music that can enliven the mood of a person would be our utmost aspiration.

Ideation Process



Train of thoughts

So, how did we come to a conclusion of doing our Category 5 project in the form of music composition? Creative Arts can be done in many forms and at the end we chose to compose songs. The first step we took in the project is brainstorming different types and routes that we could take. For instance, we had thought about creating models, expressing our photography skills, and of course, our main idea which is song composition. We had also come about different themes that could focus on and emphasis in our project, we considered topics such as love, family, friendship and the more complicated ones which are about fear and anger along with melancholy.

So we have eliminated models and photography due to many reasons, the biggest factor is of course the fact that none of the group members are specialised or skilled in these 2 topics. For the different types of themes, we used a process of elimination which was able to help us in deciding on which theme we are going to focus on. Narrowing down to only composing songs, we are to primarily decide on the theme we will be using. We did try out the Minor theme (sad, sombre type), even with a considered title of “影, Shadow”, but the songs weren't really catchy, and there were little information to be found on the Internet. We then thought about the topic of friendship, although it is seen as a topic that could be relatable to everyone, we realised that love was still more complicated and sophisticated

compared to friendship, in this case it would help us to show more understanding in our music and depth. In the current generation, people are more obsessed with romance than friendship. We also did our research and realised many famous songs are mostly about love and little is about friendship.

Our next topic of consideration was about family. Perhaps, it may seem that family is a very special and touching topic to focus on, but the more we looked into it, we came to a conclusion that this topic is too direct and it would be tough for us to show in depth understanding about it and the storyline or composition would not have stood out. Our research on this topic has shown us that it would not have been engaging as it does not address the current trend and the more popular topic. In addition, for us to improve our songs, we would need the help from different examples and references for us to refer to, but sooner or later we realised that there were not many popular music that were about family.

Process documentation

The project work was affected by the unprecedented pandemic of Covid-19, we needed to adapt to many of the limitations and restrictions to complete our final product. Before the pandemic, as said before, we all came together for a discussion on different topics and subjects that were possible considerations for our project. After we had come to an agreement on what we were exactly doing for our project (music composing about love), we divided different areas that we could research on and tried our best to obtain as much information of different types and styles of music that could also be implemented in ours. We considered past experiences of artists and found out how their song composition experience was for them and also learned from their mistakes.

We started planning on the overall construction of our project and how we would like to go about it. We discussed the work division evenly to be able to complete as a team efficiently as teamwork makes the dream work. In addition, we had many meetings with our project mentor to discuss our project and consulted on how the composition of our song should work. Then during the May holidays, we began our main part of the project, which is the song composition. We then realised that composing songs and writing the lyrics on our own was not an easy job, but we persevered, despite all the try and errors on wrong chords

we used or the change of melody, we were still able to come up with 4 different songs that were amazing.

After the main structure of our songs are completed, to make sure our music is well done. We hand over our music to a song arranger to help us rearrange the music format to make it sound better, together with the final edits of the music, we were finally done with that. Not to mention, we had to also make sure our lyrics had no grammar mistakes and even had to change some of the language used to make sure our songs sounded fantastic. Last but not least, we prepared our slides and presentation, along with our written report for the final evaluation. We had to conduct many practices and rehearsals to make sure that we were able to squeeze our presentation into the 8 minutes that we were given to present our project. All of it worked just as we wanted it to and we are happy about it.

Artists' Inspirations

For a project to be executed perfectly, some inspirations are supplementary for us. Different artists were able to give us a range of ideas that helped us come up with certain points or advice that we may want to include in our songs. Inspirations from various artists around the world gave ample information and widened our point of view. With our artists' inspirations, we were able to come up with ideas for our songs in a more creative way.

Inspirations awaken us to new possibilities by allowing us to transcend our ordinary experiences and limitations. Inspirations propel a person from apathy to possibility, and transform the way we perceive our own capabilities. Inspiration may sometimes be overlooked because of its elusive nature.

Not only that, acting as a backbone, our inspirations have also played a crucial role in ensuring that our project was on the right track. Similar to our project mentor, inspirations provide us guidance on every step we take through the process of song-composing.

Two of our most influential sources of inspirations include two renowned celebrities, Joker Xue and Taylor Swift.

1st Artist - Joker Xue

Joker Xue, also known as 薛之谦 in Chinese, is known for his hit songs and stage charisma with his signature musical style. Since his 2006 debut, Xue has produced a string of great hits detailing love's triumphs and woes. His musical style melds the classic pop pairing of piano and strings with folk-tinged acoustic guitar and sultry R&B beats. His next several albums explored a variety of genres and concepts, which received wide critical acclaim and secured his status as a leading singer of his generation. He is among the most-streamed Mandopop artists on Spotify. Xue has also found success on many high-profile variety shows, and is recognized as a popular TV personality for his sense of humor.



Joker Xue has released many love-related music in his music career and has inspired us to do the same as well. His choices of words and language have shown us the undermining meaning of his music. The way he formats his songs has also given us a blazing urge to follow his lead, and has implemented his style in our construction of the music. The various combinations of chords has also allowed us to excel in our own type of music and chord choices. Different moods and vibes that are dispersed through his chord choices are also being implemented and being applied in our own music. As mentioned, our theme of our songs are based on love, which was also inspired by Joker Xue with his music often narrating a love-related relationship.

2nd Artist - Taylor Swift



After researching on why and how Taylor Swift wrote “*Lover*”, we found out that her idea simply came from a mental imagery of two people swaying on a dance floor at 3am. With that imagination, the whole song with swings and slow drum beats as its unique background effect made sense. It reflected the image of two people dancing in a quiet place, hands around their waists while they revelled in absolute silence. The swings imitate their dance steps as they take them one at a time and the slow drum beats depict their steady heartbeat. This is how an effect of tranquility is made in the listener’s heart such that it calms his nerves down (as how it did calm ours) and creates the perspective that love has to be felt by one’s calm heart. She also used simple language to convey the message lovers would like to tell one another in her whole song.

Our largest takeaway here was that any random idea we have can be shaped into creative music. As long as we take our time to realise and enlarge the little signs of love presented in our lives, they can be written in a way such that not only we can feel what the music is

trying to express, but that even the audience can feel what the songwriter is feeling (/wants them to feel).

We attempted to apply this idea in two of our songs. "Cool People" depicted our wish for somebody to tell us that we are cool and how we would have done the same to them too. And "Infatuation" enlarged the little thoughts we hope to tell our crush.

Final Product - 等你的未来

Score ♩ = 108 等你的未来

Intro

Melody

Mel

Verse 1

Mel

Mel

Mel

Pre Chorus

Mel

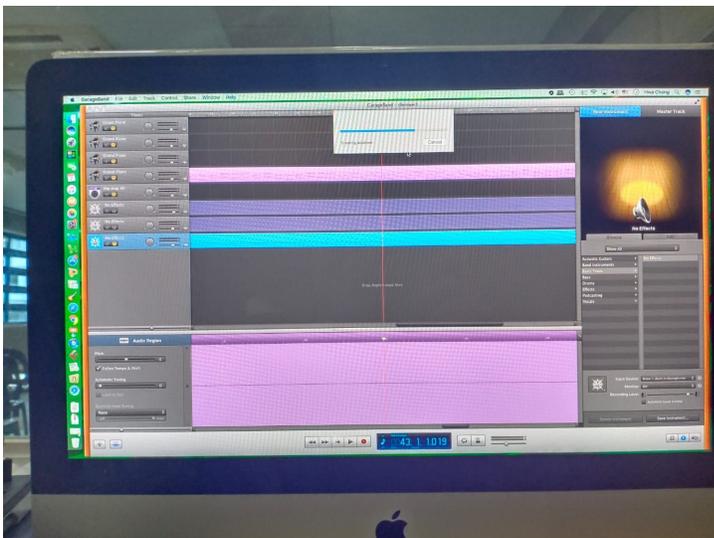
Mel

等你的未来 is our first composed song. We participated in a song-writing competition organised by our school (写一首歌给你2020) and won as a finalist. This song is written in

the C major key and has a series of chord progressions throughout the whole song. We found an arranger to help play the background music and apply ornaments such as drum loops and the style of music. This song can be considered as slow jazz.

About the song, a mother faces a disease that costs her her life. In the song, she offers her son a rose and a sunflower as she blurts out her last words before facing death. She assures him that she would always be with him and despite her absence, his future can still be so much brighter. And definitely, she would be waiting for his future to come, waiting for the time when he turns out to be a successful grown up. 等你的未来 means both “waiting for your future” and “waiting for you in the future”. This gives a sense of eternal faith, that his mother would always be waiting for him in heaven, and that there would be no end to her patience. The love depicted in this song is that of a motherly love. And what we want to highlight here is that the strongest love is not shown through romance, rather through a dying mother. This is why the whole song is written in a way that one’s first impression of the song upon hearing it is that of two lovebirds flirting with each other. But after interpreting the song deeper, one would find out that the joy of love sometimes emerges from the most melancholic situations.

Final Product - 认真



认真 is an unique song with its engaging lyrics that rhymes and uses excellent choice of words to tell a common and realistic story. The format of the song is also interesting, as there is a rapping section for the first interlude. The song is composed in the C major key with the time signature 4/4 and 60 bpm tempo. Instruments used are grand piano and hip-hop drum machine from garage band. Recording is also done through professional equipment.

This song describes a relationship between an ignorant boy and a girl. "Relationship" because it seems neither like friendship, nor mutual crush, nor romanticism. Perhaps it is just the boy's passionate and wishful thinking, but he then takes it seriously and regards the girl as his spiritual sustenance. Over time, the boy finds that the initially ambiguous relationship has in turn become more ambiguous. He finds out that the girl is in a relationship with another boy. Confused, uncertain of whether he should continue to be persistent, uncertain of whether his seriousness will get him good results, he refrains from asking the girl, afraid that the truth would turn out as a cold answer. He becomes humble and cautious. But eventually, he still has to face the cruel reality. She is long gone, as he realises that he has no reason to let her stay. The story is simple, short, common, and realistic. And while he grieves, he matures.

Final Product - Infatuation

SCORE $\text{♩} = 70$ **INFATUATION** DANIEL ADAM LU

F C/E F C Dmi⁷ G sus G

Draw 2xT

D. S.

D. S.

D. S.

D. S.

17

We were thinking about composing a typical love song at a normal pace of around 70 beats per minute. Considering that even the most typical love songs have their own values, we decided that it was not a bad choice after all to write about a teenage crush that would in fact turn out as one of the most relevant topics for us adolescents.

To develop an infatuation on someone is to have a short-lived but intense passion towards someone else. Many teenagers are going through such cases in life nowadays when they tend to simply have a crush on someone else. And our job as songwriters is to disclose the inherent thoughts of a secret admirer, because these thoughts may seem immature when

they actually hold a certain truth of one's feelings towards another. After all, what leads to falling in love is infatuation itself. In the song, a boy develops an infatuation with a girl who is probably facing emotional problems. This song presents the boy's words towards the girl (written as his thoughts) as he hopes that time could heal her and bring them together. It also reveals the extent of the boy thinking about his crush. This song thus exhibits the significance of how a childhood crush can be as affectionate and ambitious as other kinds of love.

Final Product - Cool People

SCORE J=120 **COOL PEOPLE** DANIEL ADAM LU

E^bmaj⁷ Cmi⁷ Gmi⁷ F Gmi⁷ F F

D. S. 5

E^b B^b/D F E^b Gmi⁷ F

D. S. 9

E^b B^b/D F Gmi⁷ F E^b B^b

D. S. 13

E^b B^b/D Cmi⁷ B^b/D E^b F Cmi⁷ E^b F

D. S. 17

Unlike “Infatuation”, “Cool People” is transposed to the key of Bb major. We decided to not only work with slow and steady songs but also give it a try for a fast-paced song that is more likely to captivate our listeners. The song holds 125 beats per minute and is considered relatively fast. This song, similarly to “Infatuation” and “等你的未来”, is arranged with Finale and Reaper (apps to include the drum loops and chords as background music).

Moving away from slightly disillusioning songs (considering that “Infatuation” holds a little negativity of the girl facing emotional problems), we decided to come up with that one song that resonates joy within the listener. Our first random thought was that we would like anyone to call us cool people, accept our uniqueness and love us just the way we are. Same goes to anyone here who wants to be truly loved because of their typical self. Therefore, we wrote this song about the protagonist telling his beloved that her unique personality is what attracts him most, while assuring her that their natural selves are what makes them cool people. The “love” specified in this song ranges from romance to friendship, or even love expressed among family members. The repetition of “Woah Woah” in the song is also intentionally included due to artists’ inspirations of including signature phrases /ideas/ornaments in our songs so that they stand out even more.

Our Album Cover



By understanding the theme of these songs, at first I tried to extract keywords, such as love and grief, and used some elements related to the theme to try out different compositions, such as a person walking alone on a road at night, but I felt it is too plain, this kind of composition is relatively common and it is applicable to any themes, and it cannot resonate

with our target audience. As this is the first time I am making a cover, it is difficult to decide on a composition that could convey the story. After trying many types of layouts, I decided to adopt abstraction by putting a silhouette in the center of the cover, forming a visual focus, making the cover more visually impactful and appealing. The elements used in the picture fit the theme. The thorns represent the ups and downs in the pursuit of love. The silhouette represents the group of people who are being injured while seeking for love. The faint yellow light on the body represents their enthusiasm, which also slightly brightens the whole dull image. Lastly, the simple background renders the atmosphere. Although the people in the image have been hurt, they still have love in their hearts. This is the central idea we hope to convey.

Reflections

Group reflections

There were a number of lessons that came out of the process of this whole project. While many of them are things we knew previously, or even learned through the course materials, having lived these lessons makes them all the more meaningful and likely to remain with us.

Lesson One - **There will always be problems.** Having a predetermined approach to dealing with issues is a significant help in addressing and working through problems. Going forward we plan to always include a team charter process at the outset of new projects, and to include agreements and expectations around how to address conflict, violations and setbacks. It won't be easy. But being thoughtful about course correction and worst case outcomes is a good investment in future harmony.

Lesson Two - **Teamwork is work.** Obviously doing the project related aspects were work, but managing the dynamics of the team itself is also work - and it is often harder than task work. Teams benefit from discussing and establishing explicit team norms, which prevents the development of inappropriate norms. But even if these norms are discussed early on, they are still not an easy conversation. Our team realized and collectively decided that it was imperative to devote time and energy to resolve any conflict as soon as it was identified.

Lesson Three - **The team isn't working if the team isn't working.** The team dynamic has to be a priority to sustain healthy and productive relationships. The more our team members valued membership in the team, the more motivated they were to perform. Addressing the need for increased sense of commitment and attraction to a team allowed us to learn how to enhance our group cohesion. This led to every team member performing at their best.

Lesson Four - **Pay attention to each other.** The biggest mistake teams can make is to just dive into the work without establishing or nurturing relationships. The ability to read other's moods and attitudes is important because knowing what someone looks like when they are engaged is the first data point in helping get them re-engaged when they aren't. We only learned this because it was a specific expectation of this assignment.

Lesson Five - **People are more important than projects.** Life presents the unexpected and sometimes taking the time to be there for each other and listen to each other is more important than the original agenda. Of course, we want to be as productive as possible, but one of the most valuable times for our groups was at the beginning of each meeting when we would go around and check in on everyone. When you are working within a remote group, you don't always have the ability to see or hear what may be going on and until you have that face to face meeting, you don't always know what that individual is going through (good or bad).

Lesson Six - **Learn from conflict.** We tried to forecast and predict that conflict would occur. Therefore, establishing norms was a priority for us. We intentionally made our norms very detailed in order to be able to easily identify deviations. We communicated that we needed to address any issues that were potentially deviating from our norms early on. This was to eliminate the risk of any potential issue or problem escalating beyond the point of comfort. What we realized was that any conflict, no matter big or small will still bring a sense of discomfort to the team.

Chen Wei:

This is my first time doing a cat 5 project, and also my first time being a project leader, so it is considered quite a brand new experience for me. In addition to the pandemic, things have been quite different and challenging. I struggled quite a lot in terms of composing and recording my song, as it is inconvenient for me to get the facilities I need. At the same time I also need to cope with academic stress. At last I manage to get the song done, and overall it is quite a pleasant experience, as everyone in the group is very cooperative and we helped each other on the way. We learnt to understand each other and learnt how to cope with

stress. I had picked up some time management skills, and of course the joy and interest in music.

Junren

In light of Covid-19, we were anxious about whether we were able to cope with the limitations, and still be able to complete our project perfectly. But we managed to come together as a group to complete it. I realise that the choice we have chosen to compose songs with 2 different languages has made our journey much harder. We needed to be bilingual and thought of a way to implement that in our presentation as well. In terms of teamwork, we also got affected as I was in a different class than the other 3 and due to the rule of no intermingling, I was basically only able to communicate through online. Although there were disagreements here and there, we persevered and managed to finish our journey as a team. Through all these hardships, I have learned to adapt to the situation and be more flexible when it comes to managing my work. It was an entirely new experience for me and I hope for more obstacles to come my way!

Daniel:

Despite the pandemic that has disrupted at least half of our schedule, we still managed to come together as a group and complete our project. What I learnt most throughout this trying groupwork, honestly, is that good teamwork lies beyond physical cooperation and assistance among teammates, rather how well a team could react to a sudden challenge swiftly when it strikes. In this case, owing to the various restrictions imposed, we had to have online discussions (which were so much more inconvenient and ineffective due to the constant lags and technical problems). I was also disallowed to physically meet up with our mentor and thus he could not directly point out the parts of our songs that could be bettered. However, through these obstacles, I learnt how to be flexible and more creative through experimenting alternative solutions to complete our project work.

Yifei:

At first I was uncertain whether I should enroll in cat 5 since I had no experience in music. Although in the end my group chose cat 5, I was relieved that I was tasked to design an album cover. I had never designed a proper cover or a logo previously, which made it hard for me to navigate and start on my work. I researched various cover designs and gradually developed my first cover. I made several drafts and managed to select and work on my final design with the help from my seniors and teachers. Due to the covid 19 pandemic, I had difficulties interacting with my groupmates and mentor at first, as we were unable to meet up, which resulted in inefficient online meetings. However, we adapted to the new situation and managed to improve on our work accordingly. This project has turned out to

be very rewarding and I have learnt new skills along the way.

Citations

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